

Caistor St Edmund

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Compiled by Sue Harman and Vicky Hawes February 2015

Updated July 2015

THE REDISCOVERY OF ROMAN BRITAIN.

LESSONS OF CAISTOR.

THE ICENI AND "BOADICEA."

EAST ANGLIA'S "VIRGIN SOIL."

(By Sir George Macdonald, K.C.B.)

The astonishing photograph of Caistor-next-Norwich, which was published in "The Times" of last Monday, will surely convince the most sceptical that in the aeroplane the archaeologist has found an instrument of extraordinary value. During the period of the Roman occupation Venta Icenorum was the tribal or cantonal capital of the district which we know as Norfolk. It was one of the smallest among the Romano-British towns—smaller even than Caerwent and not nearly so large as Silchester—but it was nevertheless of sufficient importance to have been made the terminus of a high road from London, then, as now, the nerve-centre of the island.

When Romano-British civilisation perished the place seems to have been deserted by its inhabitants. For fifteen hundred years no man has dwelt within its walls. Its defences have crumbled into ruin, and the area they enclose has become arable land, save for a single corner, which has been reserved as a churchyard. Thanks, no doubt, to its medieval name of Caistor, antiquaries had dreamed of it as a great Roman place of arms and had indulged in vain imaginings as to its strategic significance in this or that phase of the invasion. All at once aerial photography has lifted the veil and has proved that the etymological association with *castra* was (as it often is) misleading. The faith of the more prosaically-minded archaeologists has been fully justified.

THE ICENI AND "BOADICEA."

What has now been unmistakably revealed is a civil settlement, laid out in the usual chess-board fashion. The lines of the streets emerge with almost startling clearness. The position of the basilica or town-hall is not obscurely indicated. It is even more surprising that the situation and the actual ground-plan of two temples should be distinctly discernible. It is obvious that a map of this kind will greatly facilitate the task of scientific exploration, and it is satisfactory to be assured that a competent scholar, who has already had much experience in work of the sort, is to be put in charge of the excavations which are to be undertaken forthwith.

Sensational results are hardly to be looked for. The likelihood is that Venta Icenorum was happy in having no history. It is true that, when the legions of Claudius landed in Kent in A.D. 43, the Iceni were among the most powerful of British tribes. It is true also that, although they at first submitted without a struggle, eighteen years later they rose in a revolt that shook the Roman dominion on the island to its foundations. Headed by their "warrior-queen," they sacked and burned Colchester and St. Albans, and London, slaying in these places alone (we are assured) as many as 70,000 Romans and Romanised Britons. But the end was not yet. The Imperial Governor rallied his forces, and drew Boudicca and her host into battle on ground of his own choosing. His victory was complete, and he followed it up by exacting a retribution so tremendous as to lead to his own recall. The territory of the rebels was harried with fire and sword. Most dreadful of all were the ravages of hunger, for no crops were sown and the land became a desert. To judge from the notorious scarcity of Romano-British remains in Norfolk and Suffolk, it took many generations to recover.

"SLEEPY HOLLOW" IN EARLY A.D.

In the circumstances the dwellers in Venta Icenorum are not likely to have been a very prosperous community. Caistor, in other words, we may suppose to have been the market town of a none too thickly populated countryside. Lying as it did at the end of a road, untouched by any of the currents that went to make up the main stream of Romano-British life, it was probably something of a Sleepy Hollow. Yet we may be sure that the excavators will find abundant evidence of Romanisation. Latin would be the language ordinarily used, and the degenerate descendants of Boudicca's warriors would model their everyday life on lines they had learned from their conquerors.

All this we may infer from what has been brought to light through the London Society of Antiquaries at Silchester and Caerwent. But, if such an inference can confidently be drawn, is it worth while digging up Caistor to confirm it? One need hardly hesitate to reply in the affirmative. So far as Romano-British archaeology is concerned, Norfolk and Suffolk are *virtually virgin soil*. Excavation, therefore, may disclose features peculiar to this region. But there are stronger reasons for action than that. Admirable as was the work done at Silchester and Caerwent, it was mainly and (it may be conceded) inevitably concentrated on architectural details. Scant attention was paid to stratification, with the consequence that the volume of testimony which the pottery might have supplied is destined to remain little better than a sealed book.

VERULAMIUM.

We know much more about pottery now, and we are also much more keenly alive to the importance of stratification. Caistor, too, is of manageable size—not more than thirty-five acres in all—and the existence of the aerial map will save both time and money. Careful investigation there, conducted in the light of modern methods, may do for Romano-British pottery what Silchester and Caerwent have done for Romano-British architecture, and so prepare the way for an enterprise of much greater magnitude and inherent possibilities—the excavation of St. Albans. Verulamium, to give it its Roman name, was made a Roman municipality about the middle of the first century of our era. Though presently overshadowed by London in wealth and population, it retained its position of privilege as long as the occupation lasted. It is not unreasonable to anticipate that its ruins would yield much welcome information as to the organisation of civic life in Roman Britain. Fortunately, they are still accessible to the spade and pick of the archaeologist. It is earnestly to be hoped that the plague of the speculative builder may be stayed outside their borders until the whole site has been thoroughly examined and its secrets given to the world.

That, however, is a venture which should not be launched without full consideration and without a firm resolve to pursue it to the end. Meanwhile, moreover, the forces that would normally be available are busy on military sites—at Richborough, Caerleon, and York, in Northumberland, and elsewhere. On these

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(Continued from preceding column.)

there is an immense amount for us to learn. Every season seems to teach us something at once interesting and new. But Romano-British research suffers from two handicaps. The first is the lack of skilled labour. It is far better not to dig at all unless a competent supervisor can be secured, and the number of properly-equipped field-archaeologists in Britain is very limited. All honour to University College, London, for the plucky effort it is making to remedy the defects.

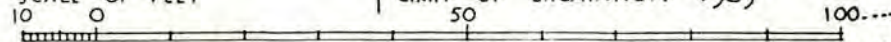
THE NEED OF A GENERAL STAFF.

The second handicap is the absence of anything like a general staff, a body corresponding to the Imperial Commission, which has been engaged during the last thirty years in re-writing the story of the Roman frontier and the Rhine. It was pleasant to be assured last summer by the head of this Commission that, so far as individual effort was concerned, we had nothing to fear from a comparison with Germany. In some respects, indeed, he thought our methods were superior. We miss, however, the driving force that comes from combination. Too much of our work is sporadic. Hadrian's Wall is about to become a national monument. For one or two decades past excavations have been carried out there in a singularly careful and fruitful manner. But they need more encouragement. Is this not an opportunity for the Office of Works, which has earned the gratitude of us all through what it has done for our abbeys and ancient castles? Again, we are all proud of the prestige which the British Museum earns by its association with explorations abroad. Is it too much to hope that it may some day find it possible to lend a helping hand with field-work nearer home than Mexico or Ur of the Chaldees?

CAISTOR NEXT NORWICH 1929

SCALE OF FEET

LIMIT OF EXCAVATION 1929

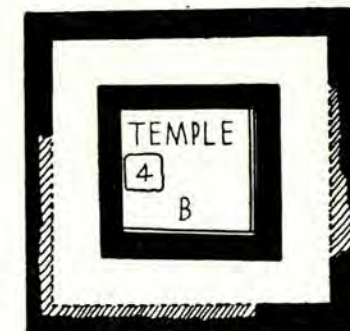
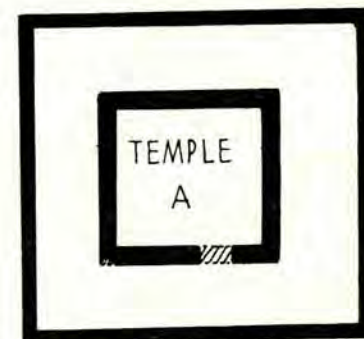
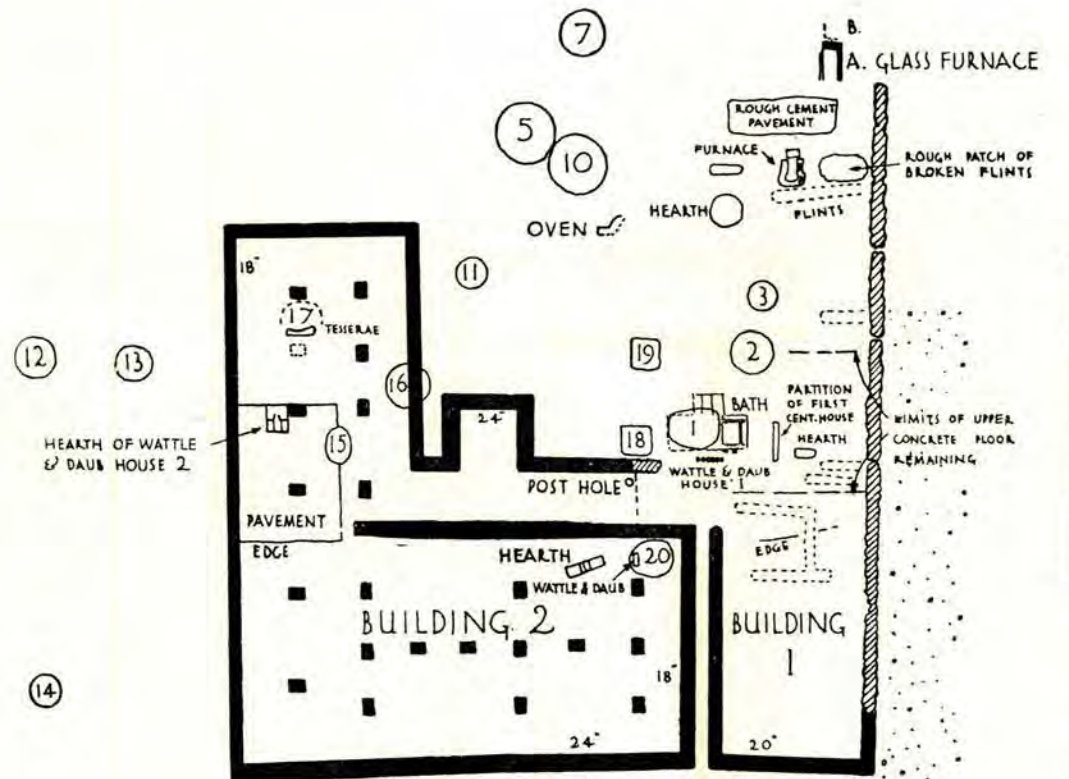


STREET



PEDESTAL 2

STREET MUCH
DISTURBED HERE



GRVEL
PAVEMENT

EXCAVATED
SECTIONS

STREET

POST HOLE

PEDESTAL 1

T.G.S.

STREET

CAISTOR "CAMP" TO BE EXCAVATED.

STREETS AND BUILDINGS OF ROMAN TOWN THAT AIR PHOTOGRAPH REVEALED.

AN APPEAL FOR FUNDS.

We are able to announce this morning that excavations are about to take place in the Roman "Camp" at Caistor-next-Norwich. The work has been arranged by a committee appointed by the Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society. Mr. Donald Atkinson, M.A., who has conducted similar undertakings at Wroxeter and elsewhere, has been appointed hon. excavator.

The site at Caistor is believed to have been the tribal centre of the Iceni, one of a dozen Roman towns from which the civilian government of Britain was administered. A remarkable air photograph taken by the R.A.F. last year revealed the outlines of the streets and buildings, and it is proposed to begin work at a spot which contains the remains of what are thought to have been twin temples.

Experts agree in describing Caistor as being one of the most favourable sites for excavation in Britain. It is hoped that the work, the importance of which is stressed in an article by Mr. Ian C. Hannah on another page, will throw valuable light on some obscure periods of history. An appeal is made to the public for funds to enable the undertaking to go forward.

VENTA ICENORUM.

CAISTOR'S IMPORTANCE IN ROMAN BRITAIN.

THE TOWN THAT NORWICH SUPERSEDED.

It is rather unfortunate that Norwich people always refer to the site at Caistor as the Roman "Camp." "Camp" is a misleading word to apply to a town which was probably a commercial and administrative centre during the whole period of the Roman occupation. Folk memory is on safer ground in the old saying:—

Caistor was a city when Norwich was none.

How thriving a town it was may be estimated from the fact that Caistor was almost certainly the *Venta Icenorum* of the Ninth Iter of Antoninus (circa 320 A.D.), the capital from which the state or canton of the Iceni was administered and the seat of an important emporium. Ptolemy, indeed, mentions *Venta Icenorum* as being the one notable town of the Iceni.

That the lay-out of Caistor at one time occupied a larger area than the 35 acres enclosed by the walls the air photograph appears to demonstrate beyond all doubt. From this it is deduced that the walls, which are of late work, were hurriedly built for protection towards the close of the occupation.

The meaning of the word *Venta* has aroused much discussion. Canon H. J. Dukinfield Astley, who has devoted considerable study to the Antonine Itinerary, holds the opinion that it is a low-Latin word connected with *vendere*, to sell, and "that it betokened the importance of the three places to which it was attached in Britain as 'markets' and centres of commercial activity." The three places were *Venta Belgarum* (Winchester), *Venta Silurum* (Caerwent) and our *Venta Icenorum*. Canon Astley continues:—

What Norwich is to-day, that Caistor was in Roman times, and as we see the busy crowd thronging the Norwich streets on a Saturday we can re-people the deserted camp and fields of Caistor with the crowd of country folk bringing their wares, and the merchants from the South buying and selling, intermingled with the legionaries of the garrison, and picture to ourselves something of the varied scenes and bustling life of *Venta Icenorum* in those far-off days.

The likelihood that Caistor was a commercial centre is borne out by what we know of the Roman tendency to develop natural resources. Exports of wheat and cloth were abundant, Britain in the days of the Emperor Julian even coming to the aid of the Rhenish lands by sending them corn which needed no less than 600 vessels for its transportation.

A STATE CAPITAL?

Nor must the probable importance of Caistor as the centre of the civil administration be overlooked. Whether it was or was not the actual tribal centre of the Iceni upon which a Roman town was super-imposed, excavation alone can prove. It is likely, however, as already suggested, that it was in Roman times the local capital of the state or canton of the tribe which has gone down in history through the leadership of Boadicea. The character of such a Romano-British capital was revealed in the course of the excavations at Silchester some forty years ago. It would possess its forum and basilica, its temples, public baths, and possibly its tavern and its church. At Silchester the houses of the Roman officials were generally found to have gardens or yards attached—unlike the close clustering fashion in which such a city as Pompeii was laid out. Study of the air photograph of Caistor is thought to suggest that it was laid out similarly to Silchester.

Of the actual form that the Roman administration took in Britain archaeologists would gladly learn more. Possibly Caistor may help them. At *Venta Silurum* (Caerwent), for instance, an imperfect monument was unearthed, said to bear the inscription: *Ex decreto ordinis respublica civitatis Silurum*, "by order of the Senate of the state or canton of the Silures." Was Caistor, too, once the seat of a cantonal government?

Mr. John Ward, F.S.A., from whose "The Roman Era in Britain" this inscription and translation are taken, has some interesting remarks on the British *oppidum* before the coming of the Romans. It was not a town as we understand the term. "It was a fortified tribal camp, but it probably contained a small settled population, whose huts tended to cluster round the house of the chief or

regulus. The Romans adopted the tribal territory as the unit of administration, and with it the tribal capital. Thus was kept up a link with the past, and to this was due in great measure the rapid acquiescence of the natives in the rule of their more civilised conquerors. How far the old machinery of administration was modified is uncertain, but undoubtedly it received a Roman form."

THIS YEAR'S WORK.

As Mr. Ian Hannah points out in his article elsewhere, the great advantage of Caistor is that it has probably been untouched since its ruin as the result of the barbarian invasion when, no doubt, it was superseded by Norwich. It therefore presents, so to speak, virgin soil. The air photograph, too, will enable the excavator to make careful choice of his ground. This year he will confine his exploration to *Insula IX*. (See map on another page). It has been suggested that the forum and basilica are probably in *Insula X*.

There remain to be added a few facts concerning the actual excavation and the appeal for funds. The work has been made possible by reason of the photograph taken by the R.A.F. and by the consent and approval of the landowner, the Rev. J. W. Corbould-Warren; of the tenant, Mr. H. J. Skinner; and of the Office of Works, which has general supervision over scheduled monuments. The directors of May & Gurney, Ltd., have kindly offered to loan tools and tackle.

Mr. Donald Atkinson, M.A. (Oxon.), who has volunteered his services as excavator, is an acknowledged expert who has conducted similar work elsewhere. In Norfolk a few years ago he excavated a large Roman villa at Gaythorpe, near King's Lynn. Reader in Ancient History at Manchester University, he describes the "Camp" as being one of the most promising and favourable sites for excavation in Britain, and likely to throw light on two periods about which little has hitherto been known, namely, the years immediately before and after the Roman Invasion, and the epoch of the first arrival of our Teutonic ancestors.

Mr. Atkinson also suggests in a note to a paper which Mr. E. A. Kent has prepared for a forthcoming number of "Norfolk Archaeology" that there is even a faint possibility of uncovering the ancient home of Boadicea (*Boudicca*). We hope to make further reference to Mr. Kent's paper at a future date.

The Excavation Committee appointed by the Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society consists of:—Chairman, Richard F. E. Ferrier, F.S.A.; (President N. & N. Archaeological Society); hon. treasurer, C. R. A. Hammond; hon. secretary, B. Cozens-Hardy, B.A.; members, Rev. Canon H. J. D. Astley, Litt.D., Frank H. Barclay, H. L. Bradfer-Jawrence, F.S.A., John Cator, D.L., H. O. Clark, Miss Ethel M. Colman, T. D. Copeman, E. W. Cozens-Hardy, C.M.G., the Very Rev. D. H. S. Cranage, Litt.D., F.S.A., Major E. H. Evans Lombe, Major S. E. Glendenning, D.S.O., H. H. Halls, Mrs. Ivo Hood, F.R.Hist.S., Ernest A. Kent, B.A., Rev. R. W. Maitland, M.A., Ralph H. Mottram, Capt. G. J. Scott, R. H. Teasdale, S. J. Wearing, F.R.I.B.A.; advisory members, J. P. Bushe-Fox, F.S.A., R. G. Collingwood, M.A., F.S.A., Ian C. Hannah, F.S.A., T. C. Lethbridge, F.S.A., Emeritus Prof. Robert Newstead, F.R.S., Dr. T. Davies Pryce, F.S.A., Prescott W. Townsend, Indiana Univ., U.S.A.; hon. excavator, Donald Atkinson, M.A.

AN IMPORTANT POINT.

It must be pointed out that the excavation will be on private property, and the surrounding land is under cultivation. Recognising the public interest which will be excited in the work, both the landowner and the tenant have consented to public inspection at specified times. Admission will in any case be confined to the afternoon of Thursdays, Saturdays, Sundays, and only then after due notification in our columns. A small charge will be made for admission, and any surplus will go to the Excavation Fund.

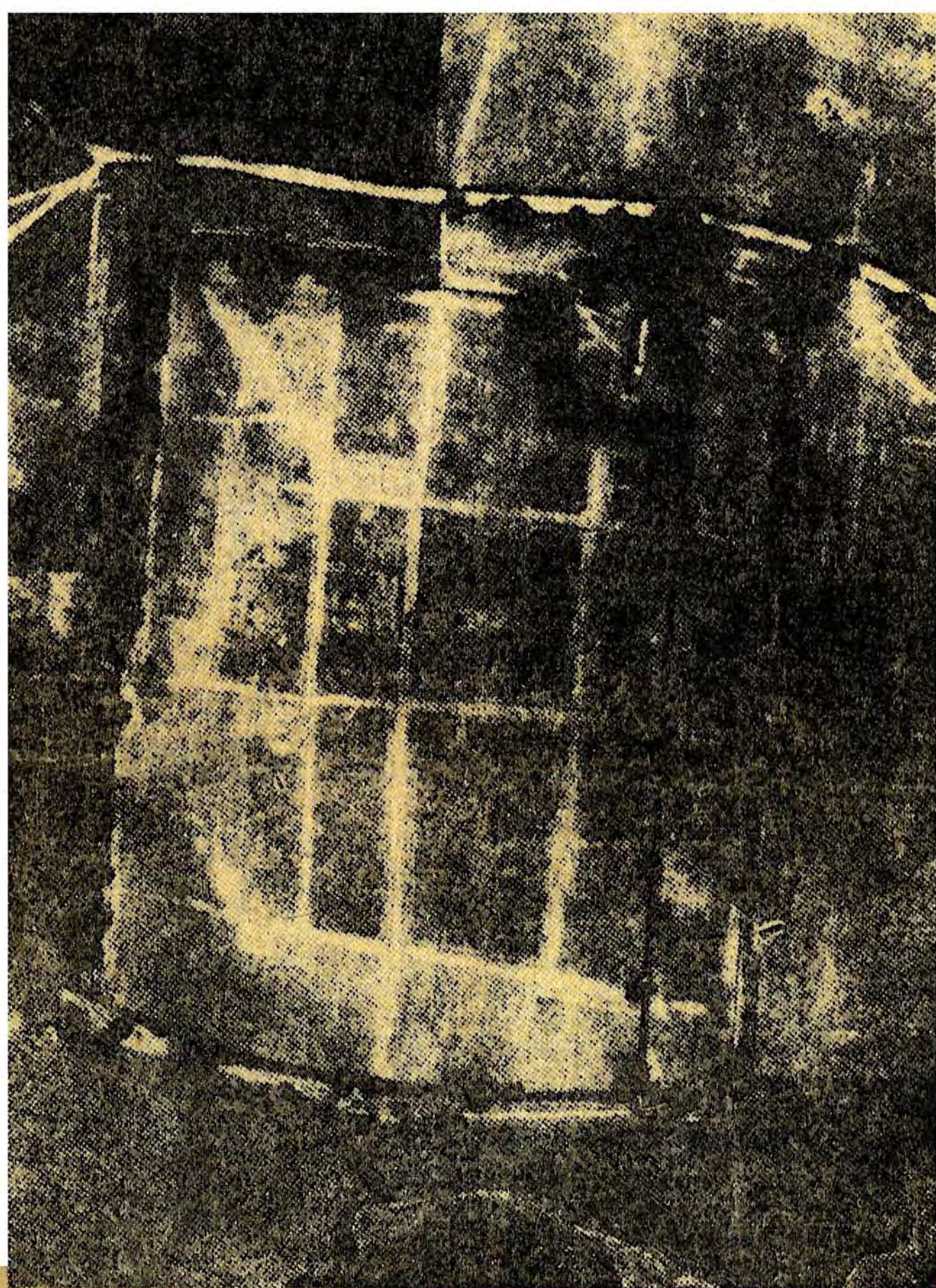
As the work progresses a bulletin of finds will be published. It is unlikely that anything worthy of inspection will be reached, or permission granted to inspect, until well on into April.

THE APPEAL.

The committee appeal for assistance to all who are interested. They are confident that the public will ensure that adequate funds are forthcoming so that the committee may go straight ahead with what may well prove to be one of the most important excavations undertaken in England.

Subscriptions should be sent to Mr. C. R. A. Hammond, Barclays Bank, Ltd., Bank Plain, Norwich, and will be acknowledged in our columns. The first list will appear in the course of a day or two.

(Air photograph, map, and article by Mr. Ian C. Hannah on Page 8.)



BY PERMISSION OF THE AIR COUNCIL, CROWN COPYRIGHT RESERVED.

The photograph of the Roman town at Caistor which the R.A.F. took last July when the field was in barley. The white lines both within and without the walls, represent the streets. Faint traces of buildings can also be seen. The indications of the supposed twin temples and of a building in the area possibly occupied by the forum have been slightly emphasised for the purposes of newspaper reproduction. The black lines running parallel have no connexion with Roman times, being due to furrows made in ploughing. A key to the photograph appears below.

WHAT MAY BE FOUND AT CAISTOR.

POSSIBLE LIGHT ON ROMAN BRITAIN.

(By Ian C. Hannah, M.A., F.S.A.)

Mr. Ian C. Hannah, who was well-known in Norwich as a University Extension lecturer before the war and as the author of that delightful book, "The Heart of East Anglia," gives below his view of the excavations at Caistor. He has made a special study of Roman Britain, and will lecture in Norwich on the subject, with special reference to Caistor, on March 15th.

It would probably be impossible to find anywhere in England a site whose excavation would be likely to yield more valuable results than Caistor St. Edmund or Venta Icenorum. After the rising under Boudicca the Iceni settled down under Roman rule and, in a part of Britain not so rich as some others in Imperial remains, their chief town appears to have been a flourishing centre till towards the very end of the occupation. It was one of about a dozen tribal cantonal centres from which the civilian area of Roman Britain was administered.

In Anglian times the place was superseded by Norwich, and there is every reason to expect that Venta will be found undisturbed by any later occupation.

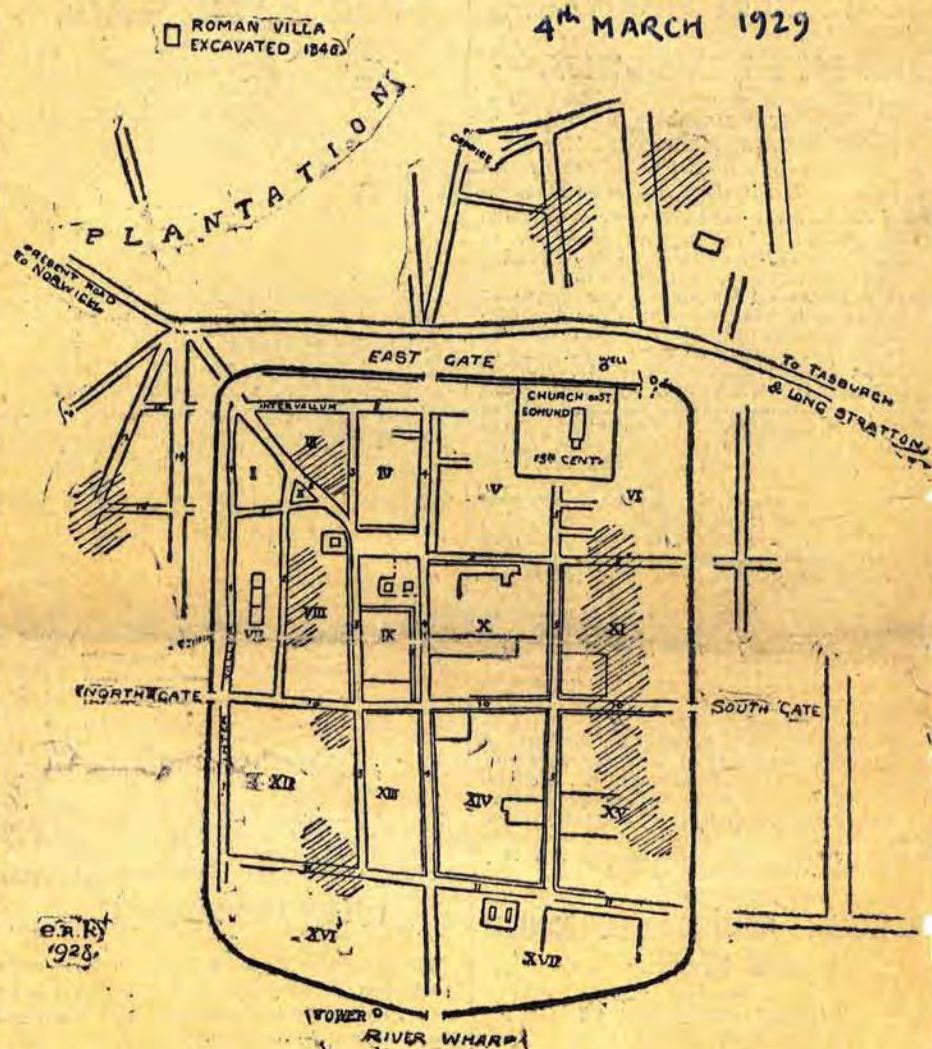
The lines of all the streets are known; the air photograph reveals the existence of buildings which can hardly fail to be of the utmost interest and importance. Prominent among them are what appear to be twin temples of very unusual character, where it is planned to begin operations. Close by the basilica and forum appear to be indicated.

It may be hoped that possibly some light will be thrown upon the obscure subject of Christianity in Roman Britain. A church may be found, as at Silchester; if the whole area could be excavated and none were discovered, that would be valuable evidence. A point of great interest which is almost certain to be cleared up is whether the temples remained in use for their original worship up to the end of the occupation, or whether they were taken over by the Christians or desecrated altogether. The only building above ground within the area is the mediæval church of St. Edmund; the photograph shows very clearly that it was erected in complete disregard of the original planning of the town, in a corner of the walls that were evidently raised near the end of Roman rule, when such defences could no longer be dispensed with. It is extremely unlikely that it represents any Imperial shrine.

It is not easy to exaggerate the importance of the excavation of an untouched Roman town that existed throughout the whole period of Imperial rule and felt the first brunt of the barbarian invasion, and that probably has never been seriously interfered with (in any way that would affect its main features) since it was abandoned by the Roman provincials about the middle of the fifth century. Light should be thrown upon obscure periods, particularly the close of Imperial connection.

KEY TO THE PHOTOGRAPH.

4th MARCH 1929



A map drawn by Mr. E. A. Kent from the air photograph on the scale of 449 feet to an inch. Numbers have been given to the insulae and streets for convenience of reference. (Copyright Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society.)

CAISTOR EXCAVATIONS.

A PROMISING BEGINNING.

The excavations undertaken by a committee appointed by the Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society on the site of Venta Icenorum (Caistor-next-Norwich) commenced late in March, and were continued for five weeks. Owing to the information provided by the admirable air photograph, published in a previous issue, it was possible to reserve for this season's work one of the insulae into which the area within the town walls was divided and to begin the work already acquainted with the approximate position of the streets bounding the area and some of the buildings within it.

Sections were cut across the streets on the north and east of the insula, and these were found to be about 20 feet wide and to consist of successive layers of rammed gravel. In the east street eight successive surfaces could be recognised, and on the third, counting from the bottom, lay a fragmentary brooch dating from the period A.D. 100 to 150. West of this street the two temples indicated in the air photograph were located and excavated. They belong to the non-Italian type common in North-East Gaul and Germany, of which numerous examples have been found in this country. They were almost identical in size, consisting of a square cella 22 feet square enclosed within a large square of 45 feet. No traces of fragments either of the cellae or of the surrounding portions were preserved, but remains found in and under the foundations indicate that both were constructed after 200 A.D.

Remains of a gravel path or forecourt between the more northerly (Temple A) and the east street, suggested by its level a date not later than the middle of the third century. There was a striking disparity in the character of the construction of the two buildings. The more southerly (Temple B) was built largely of rough sand-stone blocks with massive walls up to four feet thick. Temple A had much slighter foundations wholly of flints except for a tile bonding course in the cella wall. It is hard to believe that the two are contemporary.

West of the temples the remains of two large buildings, showing at least two periods of occupation, were located, but the work is not yet sufficiently advanced to allow conjecture as to their date and character. Pottery is abundant, especially in the lower levels, and the usual small finds—coins, brooches, &c.—were forthcoming. These indicate an occupation of this part of the site, beginning immediately after Boudicca's revolt and continuing—as a coin of A.D. 388-392 shows—at least till the end of the fourth century. So far a small silver coin of the type usually associated with the Iceni is the only indication of a possible occupation in an earlier period.

These discoveries are a promising beginning to the investigation of Venta Icenorum. They show that, though the remains are shallow and somewhat disintegrated, in the topmost levels, by the plough, yet the site was thickly occupied by buildings, and these are sufficiently well preserved to provide stratified deposits which will eventually elucidate the history of the town.

Excavations will be resumed in June and July, during which months the site will be available for public inspection on the afternoons of Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday (except Thursday, 4th July, when the Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society will be paying a visit). The committee plead for further subscriptions, which can be sent to the Treasurer of the Excavation Fund, Barclays Bank, Ltd., Norwich.

EXCAVATIONS AT CAISTOR CAMP.

EXPLANATION OF TO-DAY'S PHOTOGRAPHS.

June 10 1929

The excavations at Caistor-next-Norwich have now been resumed under the direction of Mr. Donald Atkinson. On the first day (last Tuesday) a very fine gold finger ring was unearthed. Of the two temples indicated by the air photograph in the Insula reserved for this year's operations, the more northerly was the more conspicuous, but excavation showed that the other, the cella of which is illustrated in this issue (photo A) was from several points of view the more interesting. Its extremely massive walls, 3ft. 6in. thick, were built largely of grey sandstone blocks in contrast with the flint and tile work of the other temple, and their dimensions imply a lofty and imposing superstructure. As the photograph shows, four courses remain above what was ground level at the time of its construction, but the pavement of the external ambulatory can hardly have been lower than the top of the walls as preserved, and the floor of the cella was probably higher still, so that the whole structure must have appeared as elevated above the surrounding area. Material found in the foundation of the cella pavement implies a date for the construction of the temple near the end of the second century. To the west of the temples and separated from them by a gravelled area were rectangular buildings fronting by the street which bounds the insula on the south.

Photo B shows the character-flint and tile work of their walls. These lie near the surface with shallow foundations resting in places on the cement floors of earlier demolished buildings, and the level of their own cement floors—in part preserved—suggests that they belong to the latter half of the Roman period.

To the same period belong also the walls shown in photo C of a building further north, in the angle of which was found the lower part of an amphora. The top of the long pointed base had been chipped off, leaving a small hole, which would allow liquid placed in the vessel to soak away through the permeable subsoil. We have here presumably an example of the "amphora in angiporto" such as existed in Rome as early as the second century B.C.

The small base (photo D) lies in the angle of the streets bounding the insula on the east and south. If, as seems probable, it supported a monument of some kind, this must have belonged to the last period of the occupation, contemporary with the latest repairing of the adjacent streets.

The excavations will be open for public inspection during June and July on the afternoons of Thursday, Saturday and Sunday, between 2.30 and 5 p.m. Subscriptions for the promotion of the explorations should be sent to the Treasurer of the Excavation Fund, Barclays Bank, Ltd., Norwich.

CAISTOR EXCAVATIONS.

MR. ATKINSON ON RECENT FINDS

VISIT OF NORFOLK ARCHÆOLOGISTS.

Although heavy rain fell continuously for hours on Thursday in Norwich, it did not deter members of the Norfolk and Norwich Archæological Society from making the excursion they had planned. Following the annual general meeting in the morning at the Guildhall, Norwich, about 100 members, who divided into two parties, visited Bedingham Church (near Bungay), Shelton Church (near Long Stratton), and crossing over afterwards converged at Caistor Hall, in the grounds of which the Rev. J. W. Corbould-Warren allowed tea to be served. Subsequently the archæologists inspected Caistor excavations, an interesting account of which was given by the expert, Mr. Atkinson, were shown over Caistor Hall, and saw the Roman remains at Caistor.

Mr. Atkinson, in the course of some general remarks about the character of the site, explained that owing to the weather the edges of the trenches were slippery and treacherous. He advised the visitors to keep back otherwise the whole thing would collapse. Some of the remains, he said, were extremely fragile, and if they walked on them nothing would be left in some cases but the photographs. Caistor in Roman times was a civil town. There was never any military occupation there at all as far as was known. Probably, although there was no further evidence of it, it had been a British settlement before, but at any rate some time between 50 and 100 A.D. the Romans came and laid the town out in the ordinary provincial Roman fashion with streets crossing at right angles. The whole area was a good deal larger than that enclosed within the walls. They built walls around the central part of the town, and no doubt the rest was abandoned. A knowledge of the area of the town was arrived at from the air photographs taken last year.

"What we have done," said Mr. Atkinson, "is to stake out one of the rectangular areas in the town bounded by the cross streets, and this year we are dealing with that." The area within the streets contained on the east side two temples, side by side, of the same shape and size, and further in that direction were two other buildings, which when they began to excavate them, he first thought were three, but now thought were only two. On the west side there were no definite remains. What seemed to be another street or pathway was running across just to the east, and there were traces of occupation in the early period in the way of small patches of clay which were extremely indefinite. The area in the centre had yielded a good deal of interesting information already, and they hoped eventually to get a good deal more. What seemed to have been the case was that originally there were a number of huts with clay floors and probably quite slight walls, merely timber or wattle and daub. They dated from the first century between 50 and 80. Immediately on top of these were found remains of two cement or concrete floors, which were parts of a wattle and daub building and were a more substantial

construction dating from the end of the first century and going on to the middle of the second. Lying on the debris of one of these concrete floors six coins had been found, one Domitian, four Trajan, one Sabina (wife of Hadrian), most of them being in use from 120 to 140. There was an interval after that floor was destroyed during which one of the pits were dug, dating about 200, so that during that period at the end of the second century there seemed to have been a time when there were no substantial buildings on that part of the site. Later, but still in the third century, buildings with masonry walls were constructed. One was a fairly large house; the other was a long rectangular building, the walls of which were fragmentary. Neither the exact size nor the purpose for which it was used was at all certain. These were kind of things they were beginning to find out. The dates were tentative, and they did not know yet what was the cause of the destruction of the buildings in the three periods they had recognised. Obviously it was necessary to excavate a good deal more before they could arrive at any conclusion with any certainty about it.

Mr. Atkinson then escorted the archæologists on a tour of inspection and explained to them in closer detail what the excavations had so far revealed.

Before he left to catch a train for London

Mr. Atkinson was warmly thanked on behalf of the archæologists by Mr. R. F. E. Ferrier (president of the society). Mr. Atkinson, said Mr. Ferrier, takes nothing from us in the shape of money, except what he expends, and we are deeply grateful to him for the great kindness he has shown and the time he has given. He is entirely responsible in producing such satisfactory results. (Applause.) Those were only two acres out of 35 which represented the town, and they were hopeful they might be able to continue year after year to take on further operations and so excavate ultimately the whole of the town. The expenses with regard to the present work came to £400 or £500, but further excavations would not be so expensive because certain things we have bought can be used again. The 35 acres would mean 17 separate excavations, which would necessitate a very large sum of money and take 15 or 20 years. He hoped they would be able to continue the work so that Norfolk would have a record of the town which represented an enormous amount of interest to those who lived in the county. (Applause.)

The Dean of Norwich, the vicar (the Rev. F. Lee), and Mr. Stanley J. Wearing drew attention to points of interest at Bedingham Church. An interesting account of Shelton Church was given by Mr. Cecil Upcher (of Messrs. Lacey & Upcher, Norwich), and Mr. Ferrier gave the history of Caistor Old Hall, permission to see which was given by the Hon. Francis and Mrs. Crossley. The excursion was organised by Mr. Basil Cozens-Hardy.

CAISTOR EXCAVATIONS.

Excavations have been in progress for about a month at Caistor Camp, and on Easter Monday a discovery of great importance was made. A little while before a corridored house (or rather that part of it as was within the site selected for the spring excavations) was cleared. It has an apsed room partially paved with large square red tiles. Underneath the floor was found a pottery kiln in a fine state of preservation. The pottery chamber is roughly square and the supports of the shelf on which the pottery to be fired was placed, are still to be seen. Two of these consist each of a broken pot filled with earth, &c., with clay piled upon it. The mouth of the flue is more or less intact. The stokehole and kiln contained much broken pottery of a date estimated by Professor Atkinson of from A.D. 120 to 150. Two photographs of the kiln appear in this issue.

Those desiring to inspect should visit the site on the afternoon of Wednesday or Thursday next, when the admission fee for non-subscribers will be 1s. The spring excavations are now being filled in. In the late summer Professor Atkinson expects to resume work on the remainder of the corridored house and by driving trenches up to the massive surrounding wall to ascertain its construction and date.

The committee regret the necessity of having to fill in the excavations, but if left open the maintenance and compensation charges would be prohibitive. Moreover, the stone work would quickly disintegrate with the frost and damp. A plan and a photographic record are taken of every building excavated.

ROMAN REMAINS AT CAISTOR.

RESULT OF LAST YEAR'S EXCAVATION.

PROFESSOR ATKINSON EXPLAINS.

FURTHER WORK IN PROSPECT.

Last night at Stuart Hall the public had an opportunity of acquainting themselves with the results of the excavations which have been made on the site of the Roman Camp at Caistor. This was the first authoritative disclosure of the work so far done, and it was the more to be valued because the lecturer and demonstrator was the official excavator, Professor D. Atkinson, M.A., F.S.A. In the absence of the President of the Archaeological Society, Mr. R. E. Ferrier, who is in a nursing home, the chair was taken by Major E. H. Evans-Lombe. Among members of the Excavation Committee present were the Rev. R. W. Maitland, Mr. H. H. Halls, Mr. Basil Cozens-Hardy, Mr. Edgar Cozens-Hardy, the Rev. H. T. Green, and Mr. Ernest Kent. Mr. T. G. Barnett, F.S.A., who has himself helped considerably in the excavation, had come specially from Birmingham to hear the lecture; and four working-men attended who may be supposed to have been especially interested in a subject on which they have laboured with pick and shovel.

The Professor spoke with the illustrative aid of a long series of lantern pictures. These, without his skilful exposition, would have left on the minds of the audience no more than a confused impression of stone, mortar, pillar-sites, and trenches. In an easy conversational way he related them to the rudimentary lines which aerial photography had disclosed, and pointed to the inferences which could be drawn from like vestiges of Roman practice disclosed by similar work at Silchester and at various places in France. The audience must have carried away with them an ordered idea of what the explorations thus far amount to. Perhaps also their curiosity was whetted and their generosity stimulated on the score of further excavations. Professor Atkinson's present intention is to resume work on or about the 24th of March.

Major Evans-Lombe said he believed the Camp at Caistor was the first Roman site in Norfolk which had been systematically excavated under skilled supervision. It must not be forgotten that, like the work already done, the further work in prospect depended on the generosity of the public—those, that was to say, who were interested in the archaeology of the county. It was intended, if sufficient funds were forthcoming, to carry out fresh work on a site adjoining that which was excavated last year, a site which Professor Atkinson recommended and one which, in his opinion, would yield excellent results.

THE LECTURE.

Professor Atkinson began with a brief account of the site and the extent of our knowledge of its history before the present excavations were undertaken. The area enclosed by the walls about 35 acres, but as shown by the re-

markable air photograph, taken in 1922, the Roman town extended at some time beyond these limits. References in Ptolemy and other authorities imply that the site was occupied by Venta Icenorum, the chief town and administrative centre of the most important of the tribes of Eastern Britain, and it was hoped that excavation would throw light on the relations between the Roman town and the native settlement which may have preceded it. The discovery of Pagan Saxon (or Anglian) interments in the near neighbourhood suggest the possibility that light might also be thrown on the transition from the Roman to the Anglo-Saxon period. A thorough investigation of the site seemed therefore particularly desirable, and the Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society is to be congratulated on its enterprise in undertaking the work which was rendered possible by the generous co-operation of the owner of the site, Rev. J. W. Corbould-Warren. The operations were much facilitated by the details revealed by the air photograph, which made it possible to concentrate on a single *insula*, and at once to locate the buildings lying within it.

The most interesting structures examined were a pair of small temples identical in size, placed close together, a dwelling-house of considerable size, and an annealing oven for the manufacture of glassware. The temples belonged to a class found commonly in eastern and northern France and in this country, sometimes isolated, sometimes as here, built in pairs. The plan is always the same, a square *cella* surrounded by a relatively wide peristyle, the columns of which rest on a continuous foundation, which is sometimes raised some feet above the level of the peristyle pavement. In some cases this is at the level of the surrounding arc, but in others the whole structure is raised on a podium and approached by steps. Some of these temples were lofty tower-like structures, the remains of one at Autun, with an area 56 feet square, had walls seven feet thick and still stands to a height of near 80 feet. The complete absence of floors and other evidence suggests that the Caistor temples were raised on *podia*, and the thickness of the walls of the southern imply that that was a lofty structure of the Autun type, while the other was comparatively low. Both dated from the end of the second or the early third century. The dwelling-house was of particular interest, as illustrating a method of construction intermediate between the simple timber-framed wattle-and-daub structures found at Wroxeter, Richborough, and elsewhere during the early years of the occupation and the wholly masonry buildings of the later periods on those and other sites. The building consisted of a north and east wing, with a corridor on the north side of the latter. The outer walls were of flint and concrete construction, and were preserved to a uniform level marked by a tile bonding course which corresponded with the level of the floors, and there was reason to think that they had never been carried higher in this technique. Within these walls were series of rectangular masonry bases, with their longer axes in some cases parallel, in some perpendicular to the longer outer walls. These were capped with tiles at the same level as the tiles of the walls. The sub-divisions of the house were formed of timber frames filled with wattle and daub rising from sleeper beams resting on the bases, and one fragment of such a partition had been preserved through a settlement caused by an underlying rubbish pit. The east wing consisted of a narrow corridor and two or three rooms, the north probably a series of small rooms opening on a corridor. The building was of great interest as showing in unusual detail a method of construction not hitherto proved to exist in town houses, and raised problems not yet wholly solved connected with the

method or rooing adopted. The construction of the house dated from the early third century. Beneath it were found two smaller houses belonging to the first half of the second century, wholly constructed of timber-framing, and below one of these traces of a still slighter structure, only the beaten clay floor of which remained.

The annealing oven, which dates from the latter part of the occupation—after A.D. 250—was much ruined, but enough remained to enable its character and use to be made out, and the evidence for the local manufacture of glass was a notable addition to our knowledge of Romano-British industries. The area examined yielded no pre-Roman remains, except five silver British coins of the Icenian type, which may well have continued in use till the end of the first century. The town was laid out and occupation began in the reign of Vespasian (69-79), presumably when the effects of the revolt of Bonduca had passed away, and the Iceni had been "pacified." The buildings found suggested three periods:—(a) circ. 70-100; (b) circ. 100-160; (c) circ. 200-400. The coins and pottery indicated that this part of the site was still definitely occupied in the second half of the fourth century, though the nature of this latest occupation is not yet clear. A feature of the area was the number of rubbish pits of the first, second, and third centuries. Twenty were examined, of which several contained large and varied collections of pottery, which should afford evidence of great value for the chronology, not only of Caistor, but of Eastern Britain in general. Among the most striking finds were a perfectly preserved gold ring set with a *nicolo intaglio*, lamp holders in bronze and iron, and part of an inscribed glass drinking cup with representations of chariot racing. The results of the excavations had exceeded the hopes entertained at their beginning, fresh evidence had been obtained on a number of points of historical importance, and it had been shown that the site was one certain to repay further investigation by deepening and widening our knowledge of the early history of Britain.

Mr. R. H. Mottram, in moving a vote of thanks, complimented the lecturer on the extraordinarily able way in which he had evoked the very life of the place for the benefit of amateurs in Roman archaeology like himself. The work done at Caistor came as a culmination to the dreams of many generations of Norfolk and Norwich antiquaries. He could himself recall a time long years ago when he was taken to the Camp and told that he would live to see the day when what lay beneath would be disclosed.

Mr. Basil Cozens-Hardy explained the present financial basis of the scheme. The subscriptions to the fund last year amounted to £820. Of course, there were heavy expenses in buying materials, putting up sheds, and so forth, so that there was now just about £200 available. This money would see the committee through the Easter excavations. With a view to the summer excavations it would be necessary to appeal to the public again. An American had sent 200 dollars, and could be looked to for another such gift. Mr. John Cator had promised to renew his subscription. The committee would be issuing their fresh appeal in the next two or three weeks. It was to be hoped there would be a number of new subscribers as the result of this lecture.

INTERESTING FINDS AT CAISTOR.

REMAINS OF 20 SKELETONS.

SUGGESTED 1700-YEAR-OLD TRAGEDY.

An important discovery which may throw fresh light on the end of the Roman town at Caistor-next-Norwich has just been made by Professor Donald Atkinson in the work of excavation which had recently been resumed. The remains of probably 20 human bodies, gold and silver coins and pottery which have been unearthed in the remains of a burned house, shows that the Romans were still in occupation until the latter years of the fourth century, if not the early part of the fifth.

In an interview yesterday, Professor Atkinson said the finds suggest, though they do not perhaps prove, that the inhabitants had come to a violent end in the early years of the fifth century.

In the interview Professor Atkinson said: "When the material now discovered has been thoroughly examined and studied fresh light may be thrown on the last years of the Roman occupation and the obscure period which followed it before the definite settlement of Norfolk by Teutonic peoples."

Recalling the previous work of excavation, which is being undertaken by the Caistor Excavation Committee of the Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society, Professor Atkinson said last year one block of the Roman town was examined. In the spring of this year another block was examined.

"Now," said Professor Atkinson, "we are uncovering a dwelling-house, part of which was discovered in the spring. We have discovered the foundations of a long building, running east and west, with a corridor on each side of the main range of rooms. At each end is a room extending south of the line of the south corridor, forming a wing in each case.

POTTERY KILNS.

"The room on the south-east end is a semi-circular apse. There is another apse at the extreme east of the building. Beneath the floor of the south-east corner room was a well preserved pottery kiln, containing pottery of the first half of the second century. Another similar kiln, dating from the same period and destroyed by the eastern apse, is now in course of excavation. It is clear that the house was built on the site of the kilns after the kilns had been abandoned.

"Also under the east apse is a rubbish pit containing pottery up to about 200 A.D. The house must therefore date from a period later than the beginning of the third century. In other words this Roman house was built about 1700 years ago.

THE HUMAN REMAINS.

"At the west end of the building, which had been burned, are small rooms with semi-circular ends and the floor here yielded material of historical interest. Among the burnt debris which lay on the floor were broken remains of at least 20 human skulls and many other fragments of skeletons. There was a considerable quantity of pottery of the fourth century, and some 60 or 70 coins of the period 390 to 410. Nearby was found a gold coin of Honorius (393-423) and a silver coin of Julian (360-363).

"These finds imply that the house was occupied until the end of the fourth century and suggest, though they do not perhaps prove, that the inhabitants had come to a violent end in the early years of the fifth century. That the destruction was caused by Saxon raiders is not impossible. It may be that the bones are those of the last people who lived in the house.

"It appears from the bones that some of the bodies were those of young people, but the bones are too much broken up to enable the sex or the age to be determined with accuracy.

HISTORICAL INTEREST.

"These recent finds are highly interesting historically," continued Professor Atkinson. "The excavations last year did not provide any definite evidence that Caistor continued to be occupied by the Romans until so late a period. Now, taken together, the finds definitely show that this house was still occupied by the Romans until the very last years of the fourth, if not the early part of the fifth, century."

Professor Atkinson then said that the new material, when closely studied, may throw new light on the obscure period following the latter years of the Roman occupation of East Anglia.

VIOLENT DESTRUCTION.

Asked to summarise the historical significance of the discoveries, Professor Atkinson said:—"The historical interest so far is the suggestion of the violent destruction of this house, though not necessarily the whole town, at a period that can be dated to the early years of the fifth century."

Professor Atkinson added:—"If the human remains had been found in a field and not in a house they would not have been of particular interest. It is the association of the house taken with the skeletons, coins, and pottery which forms valuable evidence of the occupation of the house at the late period I have mentioned."

Asked about the future progress of the excavations, which on this occasion will be continued until the end of next week, Pro-

fessor Atkinson said he was trying to ascertain the date of the walls of the town, but at the present time he was not far enough forward to make any statement on this work.

FASHIONS IN POTTERY.

"The excavations have produced an unusual variety of types of pottery, many of which can now be dated more accurately than was previously the case," said Professor Atkinson. "Since pottery is the most useful of all material for dating phases of occupation of Roman sites, these discoveries should assist future researches in Norfolk and the surrounding counties. Pottery gets broken, and fashions change, and the finds of pottery at Caistor have been among the most valuable results."

Mr. T. G. Barnett, F.S.I., of Birmingham, is associated with Professor Atkinson in the work of excavation.

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ONE PENNY.

IMPORTANT DISCOVERY AT CAISTOR

TWENTY SKELETONS IN BURNED HOUSE

**MAY HAVE BEEN KILLED BY
SAXON INVADERS**

1700-YEAR-OLD TRAGEDY

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Bodies of Young People?

Professor Atkinson added "that the destruction was caused by Saxon raiders is not improbable. It may be the bones are those of the last people who lived in the house."

He went on to say that it appeared from the bones that some of the bodies were those of young people.

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CAISTOR EXCAVATIONS.

FOUNDATIONS SUGGEST A ROMAN FORUM.

NEW PROBLEMS FOR SOLUTION.

Excavations at Caistor, near Norwich, on behalf of the Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society began a fortnight ago, under the direction of Professor D. Atkinson, and work is progressing favourably in the area reserved for this year's work. The excavators have already uncovered part of the foundations of what must once have been a very large building.

A continuous wall, 75 yards long, has been uncovered, forming the side of a single building. Other foundations of a later date within the Roman period have also been met with. The masonry is of a more massive character and of better construction than anything previously found.

The air photograph taken in 1928 suggested that this area contained the Forum (including municipal buildings, law courts, and market place) of the town. Although it is too early to speak with certainty, the size and character of the foundations already discovered suggest strongly that the building now being uncovered is in fact the Forum of the town.

Interesting problems connected with the alterations and rebuilding on the site have already arisen and solutions to them are hoped for in the near future. A considerable number of coins and some other objects have been found, and there is a reasonable prospect of results, perhaps even more interesting than those obtained in previous years' work.

The Roman remains may be inspected at any time during working hours and on Saturday afternoons.

Caistor St. Edmund. — The Council approved a minute recommending the granting of a 75-year lease to Caistor St. Edmund Parish Council of land at Old Church Close, Caistor, on which it is proposed to erect a village hall.

Forshaw & Hartman

R. J. C.

THE SEASON'S WORK AT CAISTOR CAMP

We publish below two photographs illustrating the article contributed by Professor Atkinson, F.S.A., on this page.

THE SEASON'S WORK
AT CAISTORPublic Bath That Was Used
250 Years

An Important Discovery

(By PROFESSOR D. ATKINSON, F.S.A.)

The excavations on the Roman site at Caistor St. Edmund's were this year necessarily limited to a short period. In view of this an attempt was made to find on the air photograph of the site taken in 1928 a building of moderate size which could be examined in the time available. Such a building seemed to be indicated near the wall of the town south of the main street, and this was accordingly examined.

It turned out, however, that in reality only a small part of the building is visible on the photograph, and the part examined—though only partially—represents less than half of the whole structure. The absence of visible indications over much of the area occupied by the building is due to its unusual depth below the surface; thus the remains are better preserved and (if it is possible to complete the excavation) should afford more valuable historical information than any so far examined on the site.

FEATURE OF ROMAN TOWNS

It is already clear that we are concerned with the public baths which were a regular feature of Roman towns alike in Italy and in the provinces. The building fronted on the most westerly of the cross streets of the town, separated from it by an open space paved with cement. An entrance, 12 ft. wide, gave access to an open court surrounded on all sides by roofed corridors, across which ran a pathway of cement leading by an opening of the same width into a large hall some 90 ft. long by 30 ft. wide. A smaller entrance led from the south corridor into the same hall. Beyond this to the west was a room of which only a little of the east edge could be examined; enough, however, to show that this had been heated in the usual Roman manner by supporting the floor on close-set pillars of tiles, and thus providing a chamber heated by means of a furnace outside the room. On the south side of these two large halls a small part of a circular room has been uncovered.

To complete the regular plan of such an establishment another heated room to the west of that already discovered is required, and beyond that the main heating furnaces. Subsidiary rooms lie to north and south of the east part of the building, but at present their size and use are unknown.

ERECTED IN SECOND CENTURY.

The building was probably erected early in the second century A.D., and during the next two hundred and fifty years it underwent considerable vicissitudes and modifications. Originally the large hall had a mosaic pavement—of which, so far, very little but the plain border has been examined. In time this became so much worn that the whole was covered by a layer of mortar laid immediately on it. Later, after a fire, another cement floor was laid over the debris, and later still a third. The southern part of the wall dividing the mosaic-paved hall from the heated room had during one of these periods of change to be reinforced by a new wall built against it. In the latest period of all the entrances to the mosaic hall were both walled up and other consequent changes made.

These examples are sufficient to show the interesting nature and massive character of the building and the great addition to our knowledge of Roman Caistor which would follow the completion of the excavation of the building and the elucidation of the various problems connected with it.

THE NORTH WEST CORNER OF HALL, SHOWING ORIGINAL TESSELLATED FLOOR AND (IN FOREGROUND) THE LATER FLOOR ABOVE.

BUTTRESS AND EAST WALL OF MOSAIC-PAVED HALL.

Move to save site of ancient settlers near city

THE Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society have asked the Directorate of Ancient Monuments to schedule an area to the south of Norwich, including Caistor St. Edmund village and part of Markshall as an ancient monument.

When this case came before the joint meeting of representatives of the Norfolk (East Central) Joint Planning Committee and the Norwich Town Planning Committee today, Mr. Harry Hopkins, the County Planning Officer, read extracts from a report on the archaeological features of Markshall and Arminghall, which had been prepared by Mr. R. R. Clarke, of the Norfolk Research Committee.

This pointed out that, with the possible exception of Caistor St.

Edmund, the Markshall area was archaeologically the most important near Norwich.

Remains of all periods had been found within its boundaries, and it offered an opportunity of tracing the evolution of local history in a way impossible on any other site. Excavations took place there in 1815 and 1938, but it had not yet been possible to explore the complex mass of ancient sites in this parish, which had been mainly revealed by air photography.

Mr. Clarke said he thought that building development of any kind over this area would destroy a site of first-class scientific importance.

In the Arminghall area the chief site was "Woodhenge," a timber temple of the early Bronze Age, which was

unique in East Anglia. This was already protected as a scheduled ancient monument.

Application had recently been made for the scheduling of the three satellite burial mounds. It was suggested that if any proposal for development of the Arminghall site was to be made in the future a sufficient warning should be given to enable archaeological sites in the area to be explored.

It was hoped that one day "Woodhenge" would be restored and opened as a public show place.

Mr. Hopkins explained that with the information at present in his possession, it seemed unlikely that the whole of the area of Markshall would be scheduled as an ancient monument, but he had agreed to a request by the Ministry of Town Planning to keep them informed of any projected or rumoured development within the area specified.

Mr. N. R. Tillett was chairman.

12 MAR 1948

Caistor Hall Country Club

Opening Dance

Over 300 people attended the opening of Caistor Hall Hotel and Country Club by Brigadier F. Medlicott, M.P. The hall has been re-equipped as a social as well as a residential club. The murals in the bar attracted favourable attention while in the ballroom, the cut-glass crystal chandeliers were much admired.

Music for dancing was directed by Gerry Hoey, and there was a cabaret. Guests were welcomed by the proprietors, Mrs. Radford and Mr. Dendy, who said that in the course of time, it was hoped to provide the club with a swimming pool in addition to all the usual features of the club.

24 FEB 1949

Caistor St. Edmund

Sir—Seeing the illustration of the village sign of Caistor St. Edmund in the "E.D.P." dated July 6th, it reminded me of a rhyme my mother taught me (which she said her mother taught her) many years ago:

Caistor was a city when Norwich
was none,

Norwich was built with Caistor's
old stone.

I would like to know if there is any truth in this rhyme.—Yours faithfully,

(Mrs.) V. M. DURRANT.

Suton.

9

JUL 1954

ROMAN TEMPLE FOUND

Norwich Pupils Helped in Caistor Excavations

EXCAVATIONS during the past week have brought to light a further Roman temple at the Roman town at Caistor St. Edmund. The work, directed by Miss A. S. Mottram for the Norfolk Research Committee, was a training excavation for senior pupils of some Norwich schools, supplemented by members of the committee.

This excavation continued the similar investigation carried out on the same site last January.

The field in which the present excavations have taken place is on the Poringland road, about half a mile north-east of the wall of the Roman town. Though the existence here of foundations has long been known to farm workers, it was only in 1932 that it was first examined by an archaeologist.

The late Commander Mann then exposed a small stretch of wall and demonstrated its Roman age. In 1950, in the field to the west, a massive foundation was located in building council houses at Old Church Close, but its purpose was unknown. Last year a further investigation was made as a result of persistent rumours of foundations in the council house gardens, and during the course of this work, directed by Mr. A. Paget Baggs, it was found that the great foundation formed part of a long Roman wall at least 400 feet in length.

Third Discovery

It then seemed possible that this was the western boundary wall of a Roman temple precinct similar to those discovered elsewhere in Britain. The present excavation was planned to test this theory by a trial dig on the site of one of the group of buildings here indicated on air photographs. This theory has been confirmed by the discoveries of the past week during this investigation, which was made by permission of Mr. A. C. Cushion, the landowner, and Mr. S. D. Skinner, the farmer.

The building found is a temple of Romano-Celtic type, of which two examples were found in the 1929 excavations at Caistor when they were thought to have been built about A.D. 170-220. The inner foundation for a central tower consists of a well-built wall four feet thick faced with carefully knapped flints and measuring 36 by 32 feet. Surrounding this was a paved portico about nine feet wide with an external wall.

Indication that the temple had been roofed was provided by the presence of numerous tiles, and the former presence of mosaic floors can be deduced from the discovery of cubes of chalk, red and blue clay. Fragments of wall plaster painted red, yellow, black and white were also found.

The small finds have not yet been studied in detail, but they include three bronze coins of the 3rd and 4th centuries, a bronze ear-scoop, part of a tinned bronze mirror and fragments of pottery from the 2nd century onwards.

The excavations have now been filled in, but further investigation on a larger scale on this important site is clearly necessary.

R. R. C.

Caistor Discoveries Help to Build Roman Picture

The importance of discoveries in the Roman town at Caistor was stressed by Mr. Rainbird Clarke when lecturing to Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society.

He pointed out that the presence of two Anglo-Saxon cemeteries outside the Roman town provided an excellent opportunity for finding out what happened during the last years of its existence as a town.

This was one aspect of a fascinating story stretching from the beginning of the Roman occupation of Norfolk to its end in the early years of the fifth century given by Mr. Clarke in this lecture on Roman Norfolk.

He mentioned some of the results of the recent excavations at Wighton. What had previously been regarded as a temporary camp now appeared to be a permanent fort constructed soon after A.D. 61 and certainly abandoned before the end of the first century. It was the first Roman fort dating from the first century to be definitely identified anywhere in East Anglia.

Venta Icenorum

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL sensation of 1928 was the discovery, by means of aerial photographs, that the so-called Roman camp at Caistor St. Edmund, near Norwich, ~~was~~ a considerable Romano-British town.

During the next four years parts of the site were excavated under the direction of the late Professor Donald Atkinson. He concluded that it was occupied, although in a primitive fashion, only about ten years after the suppression of the rebellion of the Icenian queen Boudicca (Boadicea) in A.D. 61. In the following century it grew into a considerable town—Venta Icenorum, the tribal capital of the Romanised Icenii. It was the terminus of a road from London. It had metalled streets, a forum and two temples and a basilica (or town hall) on solid foundations of masonry. It seems to have prospered for at least 250 years, and to have been inhabited right down to the end of the Roman occupation of Britain. The later discovery of two Anglo-Saxon cemeteries outside the walls suggests that there was a period during which the barbaric Saxons lived (possibly as mercenaries) alongside the Romano-British civilisation.

Unfortunately Professor Atkinson never published a complete and detailed account of his discoveries at Venta Icenorum. It was therefore good to hear this week that his friend Professor Ian A. Richmond, of Oxford, is gathering together his manuscripts and material, and is determined to publish a complete report on the work. This is all the more important, because it needs to be related to much that has been found since. For instance, there has been the discovery of a Roman port at Caister-on-Sea, with similar evidence of Anglo-Saxon settlement during the later stages of the Roman occupation — and moreover with highly interesting implications about changes in the relative levels of land, sea and rivers.

Thirty years ago Norfolk and Suffolk were described as pretty well virgin soil as far as Romano-British archaeology was concerned. That is no longer true, although nothing has been found to alter the conclusion of the 1930's that the Romano-British settlements here were of a simple, rural character, and that Venta Icenorum, their county capital, did not possess the rich urbanity discovered in the south of England. East Anglia, however, may still have much information to yield about the nature of rural life in Romanised Britain, and about the Anglo-Saxon invasion, which may well have begun as an infiltration.

CAISTOR HOUSES WOULD BE 'THIN END OF WEDGE'

IF THE proposed development of 31 houses on a four-acre site at Caistor St. Edmunds took place it would be "the thin end of the wedge" opening the way for further building in a rural area, it was claimed at a local inquiry in Norwich yesterday.

For J. W. Cousins & Son Ltd., owners of the site, it was said the development would be a "fair rounding off" of the green belt and village envelope, and an appropriate use for the land.

Messrs. Cousins were appealing against the Norfolk County Council's refusal to permit residential development on the land.

Mr. Gerald Draycott (instructed by Mills & Reeve), for the appellants, said Osier Carr, a piece of woodland and pond which was a feature of the area, was at the north end of the site, but his clients had no intention of interfering with it.

From the viewpoint of the country scene there would be no problem, said Mr. Draycott. There was a hedge on the west side of the site and there were plans to plant mature trees on the east side to form a screen.

He submitted the site was ideal for such a development—drainage, water and electricity were available; the site was four miles from Norwich; and if the village envelope were extended in a natural curve it would take in almost the whole of the site.

Mr. D. G. Buckingham, deputy

head of the County Council's development control section, said the authority considered there was no case for extending the village development area to include the site. There was also an objection in that the site was bounded on three sides by agricultural land and was visible from the main Bungay road.

Mr. Basil Aikens (Hill & Perks), representing Caistor Parish Meeting and 12 residents, said the proposed development would be an encroachment into open ground and the green belt and the inevitable increase in traffic would endanger children who had only the streets to play in.

The development would be "the thin end of the wedge," serving as a springboard for further building.

Two church bells stolen

Two of the three bells at Caistor St. Edmund's Church have been stolen.

They were manœuvred to the window in the tower and dropped on to the ground, where they cracked a cement footing round the base of the church and left heavy indentations.

The vestry door was broken completely off its hinges and locks smashed off a chest. But no church silver or anything else of value was missing.

Mr. A. T. Paton, one of the church-

wardens, discovered the loss on Tuesday evening when he went back to the church to check some figures. "I went in and saw the door blocking the entrance propped up against the side," he said. "Then I found the locks broken off the chest."

Number one and number three bells, about three cwt. each, were those stolen. The first is marked, "Anno Domini 1591 W.B.," and the third "+Ave Maria." For some years only number one bell has been rung because of fears for the strength of the tower.

Loddon police are investigating.

1. FEB 1973

Department of the Environment

ANCIENT MONUMENTS ACTS

1913 to 1953

NOTICE is hereby given that the Secretary of State for the Environment in exercise of the powers conferred on him by Section II of the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act, 1953, proposes to make a Preservation Order to be entitled "the Caistor St. Edmunds (Venta Icenorum) Preservation Order, 197" placing under his more lasting protection the ancient monument known as the Roman Town of Venta Icenorum in the Parish of Caistor St. Edmunds in the County of Norfolk in respect of which an Interim Preservation Notice served under Section 10 of the said Act is in force.

The effect of the Order will be as follows:—

- (a) While it remains in force, the monument shall not be demolished or removed, nor shall any additions or alterations be made thereto or any work carried out in connection therewith, except with the written consent of the Secretary of State granted either unconditionally or subject to such conditions as the Secretary of State thinks fit;
- (b) A person having an interest in the whole or part of the monument may be able to claim compensation under section 12 of the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act, 1953, and any question of a person's right to compensation or the amount thereof, shall in default of agreement be determined by the Lands Tribunal;
- (c) If, while the Order is in force, it appears to the Secretary of State that owing to neglect the monument is likely to fall into decay, the Secretary of State may make an order constituting himself guardian of the monument;
- (d) The interim preservation notice ceases to have effect when the Order comes into operation.

Copies of the proposed Order as prepared in draft and of the plan annexed to the draft Order may be inspected during office hours at the Department of the Environment (DAMHB/AMS), Room 306, Fortress House, 23, Savile Row, London, W1X 2AA, or at the offices of the Forehoe and Henstead Rural District Council, Ber House, 158, Ber Street, Norwich. Any objections to the proposed Order must be made in writing and addressed to the Secretary (DAMHB/AMS), Department of the Environment, Room 306, Fortress House, 23, Savile Row, London, W1X 2AA, before March 2nd, 1973, and should state the grounds of objection.

A. W. CUNLIFFE,
Assistant Secretary,
Department of the Environment.

THREAT TO ROMAN

-6. FEB. 1973

SITE CALM

THE calm of the picturesque Tas Valley is threatened by a move to preserve the old Roman town of Venta Icenorum, three miles to the south of Norwich at Caistor St. Edmund.

The ancient settlement, parts of which are still visible, is under plough — and has been so for several years.

Appeal

But the Department of the Environment has decided that ploughing is causing too much damage. So the Secretary of State is using the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act to create the Caistor St. Edmund (Venta Icenorum) Preservation Order.

The 45 acres of land covered by the proposed order is farmed by Mr. G. Howard Daniels, of

LOCAL RHYME

An old local rhyme which sums up the Roman settlement. *Caistor was a city when Norwich was none, And Norwich was built with Caistor stone.*

Markshall Farm. He owns part of it and the rest he rents from a Mrs. Hawkins, who lives in the Channel Isles and who is the daughter of the Rev. J. W. Corbould-Warren, former lord of the manor and principal landowner at Caistor.

Mr. Daniels is on holiday and away from his home at present, but a member of his family yesterday thought he would appeal

against the order and place the matter in the hands of his solicitors.

The main points of the public notice are: (1) The monument shall not be demolished, removed or altered without the written consent of the Secretary of State.

(2) Anybody having an interest in whole or part of the monument may be able to claim compensation — and any question of a person's right to compensation, if the matter cannot be agreed, shall be determined by the Lands Tribunal.

(3) The Secretary of State can make himself guardian of the monument if it appears to him that the monument is likely to fall into decay through neglect.

A reporter who telephoned the Directorate of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings in London for amplification was told by a spokesman yesterday that the proposed preservation order took in nearly all the old settlement, which is known locally as Caistor Camp.

"The idea of the order is that it should be preserved — we don't excavate if we can help it," continued the spokesman.

Damage

"The site was being ploughed and damage was being done. It would become pasture land. It's the ploughing we want to stop."

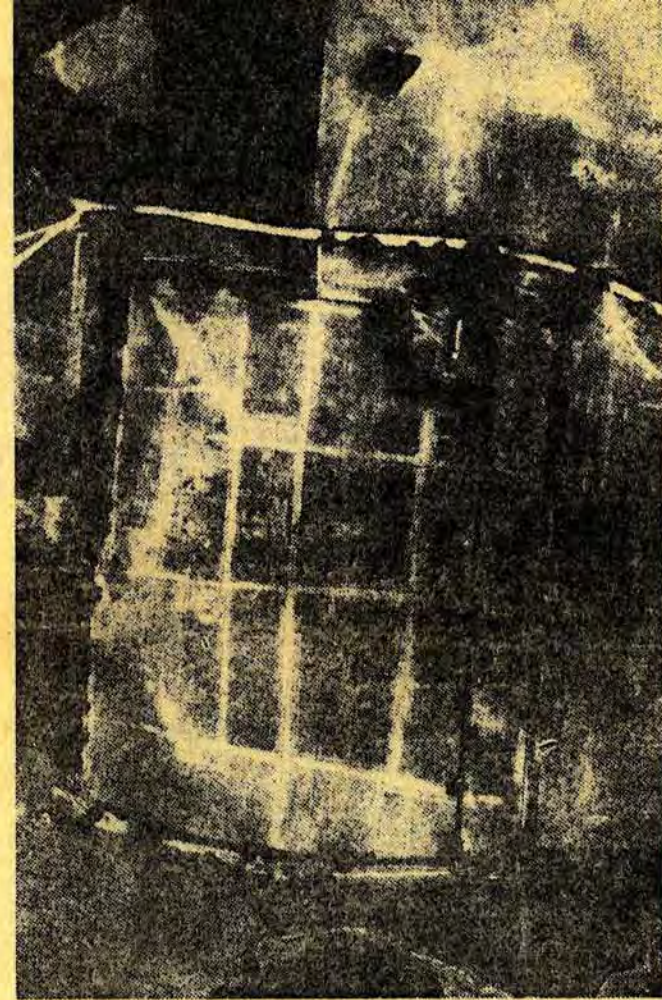
Miss Barbara Green, keeper of archaeology at the Castle Museum in Norwich, and co-author of a book to be published later this year about the pagan Anglo-Saxon cemetery near the site, said that if the preservation order was implemented it could lead to further excavation of the site.

"If it is grassed, this means that the remains of the town will be preserved for the future and one hopes that at some time further excavation can take place," she said. "Further excavation could sort out many of the mysteries related to the history of the town."

£100 Bond winners

Winning £100 Premium Bonds in Norfolk and Suffolk are as follows:

| | | |
|------------|------------|------------|
| 4AK 506180 | 3BZ 392142 | 4DW 279316 |
| 3EF 454529 | 1HZ 441321 | 7KB 439991 |
| 7KN 351208 | 6LK 719632 | 6LN 870870 |
| 6LS 311371 | 4PS 852524 | 6PK 708309 |
| 5PN 202073 | 7PT 708945 | 7RB 976152 |
| 7RN 173516 | SS 383045 | 3SL 313548 |
| VK 897753 | 9VS 211917 | 9VT 050888 |
| 5XT 608014 | YN 996474 | 7ZB 464170 |



A reproduction from Norfolk Archaeology Vol. XXIV of the Air Ministry photograph of the outlines of the Roman town.

Caistor was 'found' from the air

THE full extent of "The Green Castle of Caistor," as it has been called, was first realised in July, 1928, in a remarkable air photograph taken by the R.A.F.

It clearly shows the walls of the fortified town and the streets, as well as the internal plan and many other structural details. Faint traces of the buildings could also be seen through the barley crop.

The following year, extensive excavations, based on the photograph, were made under the direction of Professor Donald Atkinson.

Caistor is believed to have been the capital of Boadicea, Queen of the Iceni, a Belgic tribe, and was known by the Romans as Venta Icenorum.

Huge amounts of antiquities and coins have been found at the site. A coin of pure gold, for example, bearing a fine impression of Nero (A.D. 54) was picked up in a field at Markshall in 1844—a few years after the bronze figure of a satyr was discovered.

TEMPLES

Some 30 silver coins were found in 1895. But it was during the late 1920s and early 1930s that major discoveries were made. These included a pair of small temples and walls and buildings as well as a host of other finds, ranging from an oven to a small statue, and bronze mugs to a bone pin.

There were more finds in 1957, when another Roman temple was discovered.

● The term "camp," to which local people often refer when talking of the Roman settlement, is something of a misnomer.

The site, in fact, was probably a commercial and administrative centre during the whole period of the Roman occupation.

£1844 STILL NEEDED FOR

22. MAY 1976

TOWER WORK

FOR 22 years parishioners of the tiny parish of Caistor St. Edmund have been trying to raise enough money to repair their ancient church.

In 1962 they were told they would need £500 to repair the tower. Continual efforts were made to raise the money, but now £6500 is needed, according to Mr. Andrew Anderson, the architect, when he made his survey. A grant of £750 has been received from the Historic Churches Preserva-

tion Trust, and £350 has come from various other sources.

Parishioners have raised £4656, which leaves £1844 still to be found to make the tower safe.

Even when this work is complete the Parochial Church Council will probably need to consider how to raise enough money to repair the church itself.

SINCE 1959 the parishioners of Caistor St. Edmund have been working hard to raise sufficient funds to pay for the complete restoration of their church tower.

5/11/1976

Now their goal has been reached and the work finally completed, at a total cost of over £5700. A total of £750 was given in grants by Church societies and trusts, a further £570 was given in memory of three parishioners who had died during the year, Mr. R. B. Turner, Mr. J. W. Stockings and Mr. B. J. Swinger. It was the wish of their families that donations be given towards the Tower Restoration Fund.

The Society of Friends of Caistor Church, which was formed in 1973, raised over £2500 for the upkeep and restoration of the church. The Rector, the Rev. H. R. Cresswell, said he and the churchwardens, Mrs. B. J. Stockings and Mr. G. J. Ford, were very grateful to the society, without whose help the restoration would not have been completed so soon.

Roman ruins site ploughed - claim

RCS

-9. MAR. 1983

A farmer paid by the Government to preserve the site of one of Norfolk's ancient monuments, has ploughed it up, it was claimed yesterday.

The land at Caistor St. Edmund — pictured on the cover of a Government booklet encouraging landowners to preserve important archaeological sites — has been

ploughed even though the farmer was paid to keep it for grazing, a Norfolk County Council committee was told.

Mr. Eric Hartley condemned the farmer's action as "a disgraceful breach of trust," and called for him to be prosecuted.

He told the Norfolk archaeological services advisory committee: "This man was put in a position of trust, and he deliberately breached it. We ought to be equally forceful. He should definitely be prosecuted."

Committee chairman Mr. Roderick Quinn explained: "The farmer was paid a lump sum to keep the land for grazing. He has been ploughing it and growing grain crops on the site.

"I think we should express our concern to the Department of the Environment and tell them that their form of control seems inadequate.

"It is very unfortunate," Mr. Quinn added. "I don't know how deep the ploughing is, but it should never have happened."

PRESSURE

The land, beside the Roman town walls at Caistor St. Edmund, is scheduled as an ancient monument.

A colour photograph of it illustrates the front cover of the ADAS booklet "Farming on ancient monuments," which warns landowners: "Careless or unthinking farming can easily destroy for

ever fragile remains; simple precautions and good farming practice will preserve them."

The caption beneath the picture, which shows the grassed land on a sunny summer's day, says: "Farmland outside the Roman town walls at Caistor St. Edmund, Norfolk. The land is scheduled as an ancient monument and its use is restricted to grazing."

The booklet, published in 1981 by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, is distributed nationally.

Norfolk county councillor Mr. John Birkbeck told yesterday's committee meeting, held at Gressenhall Rural Life Museum: "This is reprehensible. The more pressure that can be brought to bear on this man, the better. He took the money paid to him and now he has gone back on it."

Committee members agreed to write to the Department of the Environment calling for a prosecution. A copy of their letter is to be sent to South Norfolk MP Mr. John MacGregor.

16 AUG. 1984

Venta Icenorum archaeologists

Archaeologists in Norfolk are jubilant at the news that one of the most important sites in the county has been vested in the ownership of the Norfolk Archaeological Trust.

The site is the walled area of the Roman town of Venta Icenorum at Caistor St. Edmund, covering about 43 acres. The Roman town was left to the trust in the will of the previous owner, the late Mrs. E. H. Hawkins, who died in Jersey in November, 1983.

Mrs. Hawkins was the daughter of the Rev. Mr. Corbould-Warren, of Caistor Hall, who was a strong supporter of the excavations carried out by the late Professor Donald Atkinson between 1929 and 1935. As a result she retained an interest in the site throughout her life.

The Romans founded the town in the first century AD and laid out a grid pattern of streets. In a dry summer they can be seen as parch marks in the grass. In 1973 the site was put down to pasture following the issuing of a Preservation Order to prevent further plough damage.

In the second century the stone

and earthen defences were thrown up around the core of the town, leaving the suburbs undefended. The suburbs are not included in the present transfer.

All the land involved is tenanted, and the trust has pointed out there is no public access to the site except to the church, which stands inside the defended area close to the south-east corner of the town.

The column can also reveal that after three years of protracted negotiation the acquisition of Branodunum, the Roman shore fort at Brancaster, by the National Trust is in the pipeline.

Mr. Christopher Hanson-Smith, the trust's regional information officer, told me that negotiations are in the final stages. An announcement is expected shortly. The site of the fort, between the coast road and the salt marshes, is likely to be retained for grazing.

Mr. Peter Wade Martins, of the Norfolk Archaeological Unit at Gressenhall, explained there are no plans to carry out excavations at either site. Efforts have to be concentrated on sites threatened with development or plough damage; there is little money left over for the investigation of sites, which are relatively safe.

Cross is used for break-in at church

A RECTOR has spoken out against the "despicable" vandal who tore a cross from a grave to help break into his church.

And he said the growing tide of church vandalism had not only forced him to lock the churches in his care, but to ask visitors for car keys or credit cards as a deposit when he lent them the church key. 26/10/89

A vandal broke into Caistor St Edmund church after the Sunday morning service and jemmied open the vestry.

They left after a fruitless search for money and communion silver, said the Rev Geoff Walker.

"The despicable part of all this was that whoever was responsible broke off a tall wooden cross which surmounted a grave and used it as a mounting block to get up to a side window.

"Few people can sink lower than desecrating a grave in order to break in and rob a building," he said.

The intruder smashed a diamond

by David Mason

leaded window, climbed through and dropped down, crushing lead organ pipes which were laid out below during restoration work.

He jemmied open the vestry door and emptied cupboards and a chest holding communion linen.

"Obviously they were looking for money or communion silver, but nothing was there at that time," said Mr Walker, who is rector of Caistor and vicar of Trowse with Armingham.

He said this sort of incident was on the increase. Only last month at Trowse thieves had caused £2000 worth of damage when they stole £500 worth of lead.

All three churches in his care were now kept locked, and he had had to start asking visitors for a deposit for the key.

"We ought not to be the sort of people who are suspicious of anyone using churches, but this has been forced on us," he said.

Caistor — major town of Romans

-9. JUL. 1990

SOUTH of Norwich, at Caistor St Edmund, lies the Roman town of Venta Icenorum — “market place of the Icenii.”

In its heyday, 1800 years ago, it would have been home to several thousand people, and was the administrative centre and market town for quite a large area.

There would have been several suburbs, probably beside the roads leading from the town, with perhaps industrial workshops and almost certainly several cemeteries.

The defences, which enclose only about 34 acres of the original town, were built in the 4th century, and are the most obvious element today. There is a flint wall originally 12ft high, in front of an earth rampart and deep ditch. There were gates at north, south, east and west, with a tower on each side of all four.

Centuries of farming flattened everything inside those defences, and until the summer drought of 1928, it

was assumed there was nothing left to see. Then the RAF took an aerial photograph.

It showed clearly the regular street pattern of Venta Icenorum, with its “insulae”, the rectangular blocks of buildings between the streets.

An excavation committee was formed, and digs went ahead between 1929 and 1935, directed by the late Prof Donald Atkinson.

Courtyard

The excavations revealed:

● The forum in the centre of the town, built in the middle of the 2nd century, burnt down about 200 AD and rebuilt 100 years later. This was a large building around a central courtyard. On one side was the basilica, with a long hall for public events, and offices for town officials and magistrates. The other three sides of the forum were smaller offices and shops.

● Traces of early Roman timber buildings, probably private houses,

workshops and shops. These would have been replaced by masonry/stone buildings as town prosperity increased.

● Roman streets, with thick gravel metalling, two-three feet thick, and evidence of many resurfacings. Roads were cambered and 18-21ft wide.

● Two Roman temples, side-by-side and virtually identical. These consisted of small stone towers with lean-to roofs covering walkways around them.

● Part of a private house, with an under-floor heating system — perhaps the town house of a Roman official.

● Part of another private house, with a range of rooms and at the back, workshops for metal and glass working. Caistor is the only place in Roman Britain where there is evidence of glassmaking.

● Public baths, a small swimming pool, changing rooms and a courtyard for games and exercises.

● Three first century pottery kilns.

Roman temple site raided

27 SEP 1991

An undercover operation was mounted by police yesterday to protect an historic ancient monument in Norfolk from fortune-hunters.

Three men are likely to be charged following the raid on the Romano-Celtic temple site in the Caistor St Edmund area, near Norwich.

The site, part of a large Roman town, has been the target of repeated attacks by trespassers with metal detectors in search of artefacts and coins which can be sold on the black market.

Det Insp Paul Howard, of Norwich CID, confirmed that a team of officers were sent in to tackle the raiders in the early hours of the morning.

"These grounds are protected, so it is illegal to dig them up," he said. "Three men have been reported following the incident."

Barbara Green, keeper of archaeology at Norwich Castle Museum, said she was pleased that new legislation designed to protect heritage sites was being put into action.

"There has been a major problem with people coming at night to dig up this site and many others," she said.

"People have stolen Roman coins, brooches and tools from this particular area. Some are kept for private collections but they can easily be sold if people know the right dealers to go to."

The temple site is on land owned by a farmer but it is illegal to disturb the soil or remove artefacts without permission from the Environment Secretary.

Paul Sell, of Norwich Metal Detecting Club, said treasure-hunters would always plunder such sites as long as there was money to be made from it.

Gates to old Roman city ^{pic} open at last

11. JUN. 1993

The gates to Norfolk's Roman capital were opened yesterday nearly 2000 years after it was built.

Some £200,000 has been spent buying and conserving 120 acres at the heart of the ancient Roman town at Caistor St Edmund, just south of Norwich.

Venta Icenorum became the Roman capital in the region for the 400 years after the defeat of East Anglia's warrior Queen Boudicca in AD61. The Norfolk Archaeological Trust has spent nine years safeguarding the site and yesterday it was opened to the public for the first time.

Archaeologist Dr Peter Wade-Martins said Caistor was a site of international importance. "It was the predecessor of Norwich — a teeming Roman urban centre with several thousand people living here," he said.

The site has only been excavated once, 60 years ago, and virtually all the old Roman streets, temples and baths remain buried.

But sections of the defensive walls and ramparts are there to see and the grid of the ancient streets is still visible from the air when the ground is very dry.

"It's always been one of those sites where people have wanted to walk but access has been difficult," said Dr Wade-Martins.

"But today the gates are open and, all being well, they will never close."

● The site is just to the south of Caistor and is open all year around.

Roman site raided by detector thieves

-7. JAN 1994

p-2

Metal detector thieves have plundered Norfolk's ancient Roman capital, destroying vital parts of the county's heritage.

It is impossible to tell how much the thieves netted — but a leading archaeologist said yesterday that the loss to the county's history was immense.

The gang — which could number up to 40 — dug around 400 holes in the site at Caistor St Edmund, stealing coins and brooches and disturbing the 2000-year-old town, known as Venta Icenorum.

David Gurney, principal landscape archaeologist, said: "I am outraged. This is the worst damage by metal

SUMMARY

■ Gang leaves 400 holes in ancient site

■ Slice of local history lost for ever

detector thieves I have ever seen in this county."

"This is our number one site in the county for the Roman period. The chances are that they got things of great significance. It could be one rusty old Roman nail or it could be a pot of Roman coins."

The site was opened to the public last year and is run by the Norfolk Archaeological Trust. Much of it has

not been excavated, because disturbing the land would destroy traces of later Saxon settlements.

Mr Gurney said it had been decided not to explore the site, but to leave it for future generations, when excavation techniques would be more sophisticated.

He believed the damage was the work of organised thieves from out of the area, either a small group returning over several nights or an attack by up to 40 people using metal detectors at once.

In one case they had dug a large hole, destroying layers of archaeological interest, only to find a modern horseshoe.

"Once they take out a piece of soil and whatever they find in it, it's lost forever. If we want to tell the story

of Caistor St Edmund, we will never know that piece of it," said Mr Gurney.

Dennis Jordan, East Anglian representative of the National Council for Metal Detecting, said he deplored the thefts.

"These people are thieves, it's as simple as that. There are thousands of very responsible metal detector users in this country," he added.

Det Insp Duncan Morris said: "It's a matter that we treat extremely seriously. The selfish few are taking historical artefacts away from the public."

● He appealed to anyone spotting suspicious activity at any historic site to contact Norfolk police on Norwich 768769.

Water stops after oil spill scare hits village

28.11.1994

An investigation is under way into a pollution spill that left some residents of a Norfolk village with oily water coming out of their taps.

Some villagers at Caistor St Edmunds, near Norwich, were forced to draw water from bowers after heating oil that had contaminated a private supply leaked into the mains.

Anglian Water workers

SUMMARY

- Oily water runs from taps
 - Pollution investigation launched
-

toiled through the night to lay 500m of replacement pipes to start restoring mains water to more than 20 affected homes and the nearby Caistor Hall Hotel.

But the last houses will not be back on the mains until

later today at the earliest as AW must analyse the polluted water and also investigate their plumbing to see if there is still oil present.

At Caistor Hall, owner Rodger Watkins said: "It's not been a lot of fun but we've got over it now. We were only off the mains for a matter of hours but unfortunately it was Saturday night, the busiest night of the week."

But Gerald Smy of Old Church Close, who returned home on Saturday to find he had no water, said having to use a bowser had not caused difficulty: "There's been no problems. We're a very relaxed little community here."

AW divisional manager Malcolm Raymer said that a few houses had had oil coming from their taps at the very early stages of the incident on Saturday morning, but most had not suffered so badly.

He stressed that the investigation into the incident was still at a very early stage, but said: "It appears to have come from the Caistor Hall complex."

The investigation will look at whether there was a failure in a connection between the hall's private supply and the public mains which may have let the contaminated water through.

He said the trigger may have been an AW team that was repairing a burst water main nearby. As soon as they spotted the problem they closed all the valves and stopped the oil spreading.

"As part of the maintenance of the burst main the contaminated water found its way into the system, which should not have been possible. It was a very routine job that turned very non-routine at the end," said Mr Raymer.

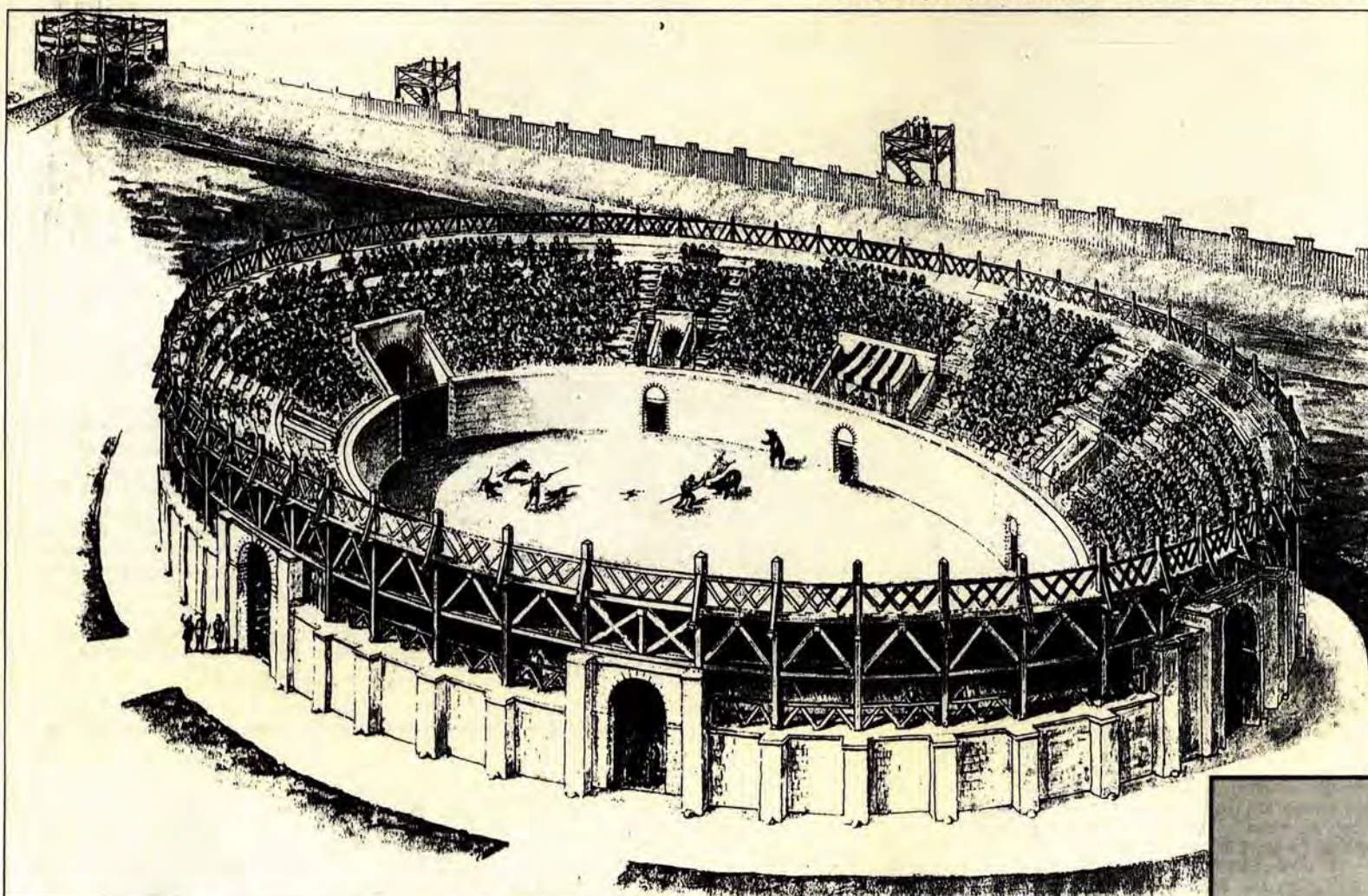
He said it was too early to know whether a prosecution would follow.

Village Sign Unveiled at Caistor St. Edmund

The ~~village sign~~ at Caistor St. Edmund, erected to commemorate the Coronation, was unveiled yesterday morning by Mr. R. H. Mottram, of Norwich. The sign has been placed at crossroads. Its design is in keeping with the Roman associations of the locality, its position being close to the site of the Roman town of Venta Icenorum.

There was a large gathering of parishioners for the ceremony in which the Rector, the Rev. T. P. Backhouse, took part. The sign was designed by Mr. Bernard Fielden and executed by Mr. L. W. Nunn, of Norwich.

The Raynhams.—Lord Wise opened a garden fete in aid of South and East Raynham Churches' Repair Fund at Vere Lodge, West Raynham, on Saturday. He was introduced by the Rev. J. C. Pallister, of West Raynham. The fund will benefit by nearly £100.



This reconstruction of a Roman amphitheatre in Wales gives a clue to how Caistor's building may have looked.

Ghost under the earth

10 JAN 1995

An amateur archaeologist has made an incredible find — a 1900-year-old amphitheatre that would have been an entertainment hub in the Norfolk of Roman Britain.
ANGELA HURREN reports on a mystery beneath the turf.

.....

Alonely figure is pacing back and forth, as if on an invisible parade square, in fields at Caistor St Edmund, near Norwich.

Almost two millennia ago he might have been a Roman centurion guarding his fellow soldiers as they hauled earth, flints and timbers into place in a vast ring. Or perhaps he would have been an Iceni, waiting with thousands of others for the start of a gladiator battle in the amphitheatre the first century soldiers had built.

Today, this is the amateur archaeologist who has found all that remains of the labours of those shadows of the past. Around him on the site of the Roman town of Venta Icenorum, the industrious soldiers and eager audiences have been replaced by sheep.

The walking frame that he appears, from a distance, to be leaning on, is in fact the specialised remote sensing equipment that helped him fulfil his lifelong dream... and discover a Roman ruin that had intrigued professional archaeologists for years.

Peter Cott was an electronics engineer from Danbury in Essex. His retirement five years ago allowed him to return to his love of archaeology, which he developed when his children — including son David, now of Banham — were growing up.

Not content to read about digs and finds in books, Peter wanted to be involved.

So he invested £2000 in a Geoscan Research resistivity meter. The "walking frame" consists of two probes which are prodded into the ground and, via a meter and computer read-out, reveal structures up to a metre beneath the soil.

Then Peter wrote to local authorities around East Anglia, offering help on any archaeological sites.

His offer was taken up by Peter Wade Martins, adviser to Norfolk Archaeological Trust, which owns Caistor St Edmund site.

He suggested that Peter explore the centre of the walled town. Now the site is an empty field within the boundary of the ancient flint and brick walls, but once it was a bustling major town, its name — Venta Icenorum — meaning market place of the Iceni.

Before the Romans, Norfolk and North Suffolk were the homelands of the Iceni, who probably had a tribal centre near Caistor.

Led by Queen Boadicea, they rebelled against Rome in AD61. But they were quickly suppressed and the Roman town of Venta established to bring stability to the area.

Then as Roman rule crumbled under attack from the Angles and Saxons, Venta became one of the first British towns to come under Anglo Saxon rule, in the mid-AD400s.

It fell into decay, and eventually out of memory. Its rediscovery came not from the ground, but from the air. The summer of 1928 was hot and dry, leaving the fields parched. When a pilot flew over Caistor St Edmund he spotted a strange grid pattern etched in the ripening corn.



Town life: a saucepan handle found at Caistor decorated with a figure of the Roman god Mercury. Below, part of a blue glass cup showing chariot racing, which may have taken place at Caistor.

He took a photo, published in The Times newspaper, and interest was immediate. The aerial photo had captured the outline of foundations of the long-buried Roman town.

Where foundations remained the soil was shallower and drier, resulting in the paler corn patterns. Donald Atkinson of Manchester University began an exploratory dig at the sites of two temples, the south gate and the public baths.

He re-buried these sites, and never published a full report. Venta slipped out of the public spotlight for another 50 years.

Then in 1984, the Norfolk Archaeological Trust was bequeathed the site of the Roman town by the last private owner of the land, Mrs E H Hawkins.

Money was raised to buy the fields around it and the 120 acres have been put down to grass, to protect the area from ploughing.

Many archaeologists, professional and amateur, have since tried to piece together what lies below. Peter Cott certainly was delighted with the results of his resistivity research on the Venta forum foundations.

But his eyes were now set on the field south of the town walls. More aerial photos, taken in the Seventies and Eighties, had shown a

large circular shape near the south gate.

Archaeologists guessed it could be the site of an amphitheatre, but had no evidence. If so, it would be of great importance, both to the Venta site and nationally — there are only 16 known in Britain.

A metal detector had searched the site, and members of the Norfolk Archaeology and History Research Group had carried out a field walk looking for more clues.

So, in April, Peter and his son, David, began their resistivity survey. For all their anticipation, the work was fairly tedious.

Twenty-metre squares were marked out around the site, and slowly Peter would walk the resistivity meter up and down the grid, taking 400 probe readings per square.

For two and a half days, the Cott's kept up their quiet pacing. Gradually the computer spewed out squares until the whole oval and its surrounding area was covered.

Now Peter could see what he had longed to find — the outline of an amphitheatre with an arena 40 by 30 metres.

A building this size could seat perhaps 5000, making it the entertainment focal point for Venta and surrounding settlements.

Outside the main ring is the shadow of another form, maybe a supporting wall. Perhaps the amphitheatre was made of earth bank walls with a timber construction to hold seats, or it could have been partly stone.

And what would have happened there? Almost certainly not the lion and bear fights of Rome.

But in a similar oval amphitheatre at Silchester in Hampshire, there have been suggestions of bull and wild boar fights, as well as gladiator contests.

Perhaps the Venta amphitheatre was used for chariot racing — a piece of glass showing a chariot scene has been found already in the town (left), and the wealthier Iceni did ride into battle in these small carriages.

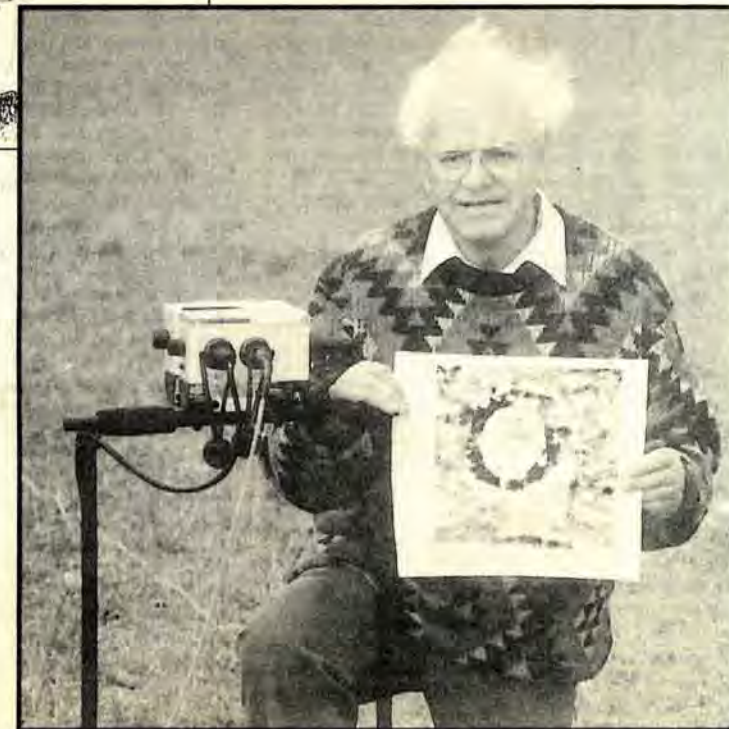
Peter's research shows possible entrances to the amphitheatre, as well as several small bays that could have been side rooms or niches for religious statues for instance.

Now using the new evidence, the trust will decide the next step for the amphitheatre. Probably it will be an interpretation board explaining the site in words and pictures by graphics information officer Sue White who has produced the award-winning series of boards around the town walls.

But it is extremely unlikely that the amphitheatre will be excavated — digs are highly expensive, as well as subject to ethical debate. And Peter Cott? He intends to continue his survey of the field, staying close to his incredible find.

But his eye keeps falling on the patch of grass which he knows hides so much.

He said wistfully: "The most fascinating but frustrating thing is that I know there is a marvellous building under there... but I will never see it or be able to touch those foundations that I have found."



Above, Peter Cott on the site of the amphitheatre at Caistor St Edmund with his resistivity meter and the shadowy, but dramatic image it has produced.

Top, coins of the Iceni king Prasutagus and the Roman emperor Nero. (Drawings by Sue White.)

Roman armies on march for history fair

16 SEP 1995

Roman armies are preparing to conquer Norfolk yet again — two thousand years after the first invasion!

Not content with their legacy of straight roads, saunas and central heating, the Romans are marching back to the county they dominated. But this time, the centurions will get a hero's welcome when they march into their long-abandoned former Venta Icenorum base at Caistor St Edmund, near Norwich.

Their costumes and weapons may look authentic down to the last detail, but these soldiers are all

members of Britain's top Roman re-enactment society. The Ermine Street Guard are helping to bring a slice of Norfolk's colourful past to life as the main attraction at the Norfolk History Fair this weekend.

The two-day fair, staged for the first time at the remains of the Roman camp at Caistor, is a pageant of re-enactment's, displays, stalls and entertainments all connected with various stages in Norfolk history from pre-history to the present day.

Norfolk History Fair spokesman John Birchall

said: "Norfolk is steeped in history, and the aim of the event is to bring history to life.

"It is not just about the Romans, although they are this year's chosen theme, and it is not just about the serious side of history — there are fun events including a Rotten Romans puppet show and a chance to try metal detecting."

More than 6000 people attended the last Norfolk History Fair held in the grounds of Blickling Hall in 1992.

● The fair is open from 10am to 5pm today and tomorrow. Admission £4, children under 16 free.

Official recognition for site of Roman town

The land on which the Roman capital of East Anglia was once sited has now been registered with the Land Registry — but more than half of all land in Norfolk remains unregistered.

Caistor St Edmund Roman Town lies on a 48 hectare area of open land 5km south of Norwich.

Now owned by the Norfolk Archaeological Trust, its origins can be traced back to the Iron Age, when it was probably an Iceni market town in the time of Queen Boudicca.

It is one of only three Roman regional capitals in England that has not been built over.

But its registration is not the norm in Norfolk. Melanie Symmonds, Norfolk register development manager said: "More than half the land in Norfolk remains unregistered. We know that landowners with large holdings live busy lives but we hope that with the quieter winter months just around the corner they will have a little time to pause and think to secure their future."

Once registered, owners have the title to their land guaranteed by the state and buying and selling can be easier.

→ Land Registry welcomes inquiries from landowners and for more information go to www.landregistry.gov.uk or call 0800 432 0432.

→ For opening times and more information about Caistor Roman Town click on www.norfarchtrust.org.uk

We've always done different in Norfolk!

In 1929, a picture snapped from an RAF aircraft showed the pattern of a Roman town among the fields of Caistor St Edmund.

DAN GRIMMER reports on how, 80 years later, excavations are set to start which could finally unlock Venta Icenorum's secrets.

The first major dig of a Roman town on the outskirts of Norwich, which archaeologists say could be of international importance, will start this month on the 80th anniversary of the first excavations there.

The site was discovered by the crew of an RAF aircraft which took photographs clearly revealing details of the Roman town as parched lines in the barley. The pictures appeared on the front page of The Times on March 4 1929 and caused a sensation.

The town of Venta Icenorum at Caistor St Edmund is regarded as one of the country's greatest Roman sites but has hardly been touched since excavations between 1929 and 1935. Between those years, Professor Donald Atkinson carried out a series of excavations on the site, which covers more than 120 acres.

A semi-circular theatre, at least two temples, a large forum and baths are among the structures which the surveys suggest are buried beneath the soil.

However, Prof Atkinson's work was poorly published and since then the site has remained largely untouched.

But, in late 2005, Dr William Bowden, of the University of Nottingham's Department of Archaeology, approached the Norfolk Archaeological Trust with a view towards starting a long-term research project at the site.

Techniques used include a scientific method known as a



Roman remains: Sue Traer on the south rampart at the remains of the Roman town at Caistor St Edmund. PHOTO: PAUL HEWITT

a site which could prove to be of international importance.

He said: "There have been a couple of small excavations on the site but this is really the most extensive one since 1935, so this is an extraordinary opportunity. I'm extremely fortunate because I used to pass the site on the train and look out the window thinking, 'that's a peach of a site'.

"After considerable efforts to raise enough money, we are set for an initial season of excavations. When we begin removing the topsoil it will have to be by hand, although we might be able to use machines later on."

Dr Bowden said Norfolk's reputation of "doing different" appeared to stretch all the way back to Roman times, which was part of the reason the site had remained undisturbed for so long. He explained: "Norfolk has been perceived by Roman archaeologists as being quite a backwater place because it was depopulated after the defeat of Boudicca.

"In the eyes of some it never really recovered, but in some ways that is a rather outdated view, although it is why you don't often find things like villas and mosaics in Norfolk.

"Norfolk responded to Rome in a slightly different way to most places, so the idea of "doing different" seems to go back a long way!"

May Gurney, which supplied tools for the original excavation, is doing so again, while South Norfolk Council and the Norfolk Archaeological Trust are managing the programme.

Dr Bowden said the aim of the excavations was to explore a number of the structures which were identified in the geophysical surveys and to see whether there was a prehistoric settlement on the site before the Romans arrived.

But he added: "Hopefully, the structures are going to be there, but archaeologists have a habit of finding something completely different to what they expected, so there is a risk I could end up with egg on my face!"

He said during the excavations members of the public were welcome to visit the site, which is off the Norwich to Stoke Holy Cross Road, and volunteers would be on hand to show them around.

The Roman capital of East Anglia

→ The town is often described as the Roman capital of East Anglia, or more precisely the capital of the area of the Iceni tribe led by the famous Queen Boudicca.

→ The name Venta Icenorum, which means market place of the Iceni, is preserved in a 3rd century document known as the Antonine Itinerary, while the Roman writer Ptolemy also refers to a place called Venta in the 2nd century AD.

→ A street plan was laid out, perhaps in the late 1st century AD, and public buildings were erected during the 2nd century AD. These included a forum (square or market place) and basilica (the political heart of the town), together with at least two temples and a bathhouse. The wall circuit, which remains the site's most visible feature, was probably built in the 3rd century, and enclosed a much smaller area



than that which was covered by the original street plan.

→ The fate of Venta Icenorum following the end of Roman rule in Britain in the 5th century is unclear. The discovery of significant Anglo-Saxon cemeteries to the north, south-east and west of the town, with concentrations of 7th and 8th century material to the west of the Tas, shows continued occupation of the area.

geophysical survey, which uses a magnetometer to "see" beneath the soil without excavating.

By measuring changes in the earth's magnetic field which have been caused by past human activity, a picture of what might lie below ground has been built up, and archaeologists believe the site is of "stunning international archaeological importance".

On August 25, a symbolic turf-cutting will take place and the team involved in the dig will recreate a photograph taken of the original team in 1929.

A few days later a team of about 25 archaeologists will begin working on the site for seven days a week and will continue until September 19.

Dr Bowden said he felt privileged to be given the opportunity to start digging into



UNKNOWN TREASURES: Archaeologists cut the turf at the start of new excavations at Caistor St Edmund. In the middle of the group is Will Bowden, director of the project. Either side of him is, from left, Dr Peter Wade-Martins, David Gurney, Keith Weeks, Trevor Lewis, Philip Fellowes-Prynn and Matthew Martin.

CAISTOR ST EDMUND

Archaeologists dig deep for 'chance of a lifetime'

By **DAN GRIMMER**

The faces peer out from beneath flat caps and fedoras, their spades ready to strike the earth to uncover the secrets of ancient past.

Eighty years after this photograph, yellowed by time, was taken to mark the start of the excavation at the Roman town of Venta Icenorum, at present day Caistor St Edmund, archaeologists have turned back the clock and returned to the site.

Parts of the site were excavated from 1929 to 1935, after the publication of dramatic aerial photographs showing the streets and public buildings, but the site has since lain undisturbed.

But, after more than two years of preliminary work, archaeologists were yesterday back in the fields of Caistor for what they say is the "chance of a lifetime" to excavate a site deemed of international importance.

To mark the start of work, the team recreated the inaugural turf cutting pose from all those years ago. Matthew Martin, chairman of the Norfolk Archaeological Trust, which owns the site, replaced the Rev John Corbould-Warren, who owned the land back in the 1920s.

The other committee members and workers who appeared in that photograph were replaced by Philip Fellowes-Prynn, chief executive of May Gurney, and Trevor Lewis and Keith Weeks, councillors at South Norfolk Council, which manages the site.

Dr Will Bowden, associate professor of Roman Archaeology at the University of Nottingham, who is heading up the dig, said: "Caistor is one of the most important, but least



SECRETS OF THE PAST: The 1929 team are pictured at the Roman town of Venta Icenorum at present day Caistor St Edmund.

understood sites of Roman Britain.

"To have the opportunity to excavate here is the chance of a lifetime."

The Roman town is thought to have been established in the aftermath of Boudicca's rebellion of AD60/61 in which the Iceni tribe sacked Colchester, London and St Albans before being defeated by the Romans.

The new town was founded in the heart of the Iceni territory, functioning as its regional capital and it has long been suspected that the Roman town was built on top of a major Iceni settlement, perhaps a tribal centre.

A geophysical survey carried out by the Caistor Project reinforced this impression, showing possible prehistoric features beneath all the areas of the Roman town.

Dr Bowden said he hoped the excavations would explore a number of the features identified in that survey, which measured changes in the earth's magnetic field caused by past human activity to build up a picture of what might lie below ground.

He said: "Hopefully the structures are going to be there, but archaeologists have a habit of finding something completely different to what they expected so there is a risk I could end up with egg on my face!"

Funding for the new project has been raised partly through the University of Nottingham and partly through Caistor Roman Project Ltd, a charitable company set up to help the work.

Funders of the excavation include the Foyle Foundation, the Roman Research Trust, South Norfolk

Council and May Gurney, which is providing all the heavy equipment for the project, just as the company provided spades 80 years ago.

May Gurney chief executive Mr Fellowes-Prynn said: "We're delighted to repeat our support for the excavation, 80 years since we first helped out."

"We'll be supplying wheelbarrows, spades, shovels and other tools to help the archaeological team discover what lies beneath Caistor St Edmund. It's extremely intriguing and we're looking forward to seeing what they uncover at this very important historical site."

The excavations at the site, which is off the Norwich to Stoke Holy Cross road, will be open to the public, free of charge, seven days a week from this Saturday until Saturday, September 19.

Archaeologists face puzzle over body buried sideways in pit



Picture:
ANTONY
KELLY

MYSTERY:
Dr Will
Bowden
with the
remains of
a fourth
century
body
which has
left the
experts
puzzled.

By KATE SCOTTER

CAISTOR ST EDMUND

They say it is one of the best preserved, but least understood, Roman towns in existence – now a new discovery has left researchers even more puzzled.

Archaeologists who have been uncovering secrets of the ancient past at the Roman town of Venta Icenorum, at present-day Caistor St Edmund, just outside Norwich, over the past two weeks have unearthed skeletal remains of a fourth century body.

The skeleton, thought to be of a man, was discovered in a 3ft deep pit and in an "unusual position".

Mystery surrounds the discovery which has come midway into a three week excavation of the site.

Dr Will Bowden, associate professor of Roman Archaeology at the University of Nottingham, who is heading up the dig, said: "At first we thought we were in the cemetery area of the town but as it emerged it became very clear it was not a normal burial at all.

"It's lying on its side which is very unusual for a Roman burial where normally it would be laid flat or extended.

"This one has been seemingly put sideways into a shallow pit and the ground surface would have barely covered it. It's folded up and at first sight it seems to be a very strange-looking individual.

"The question is whether we are in a cemetery area of the town or if we are looking at something stranger. None of us who have worked on Roman cemeteries in the past have ever come across anything like this.

Experts are left baffled by mystery Caistor man



"It could be that they were executed as a criminal, murdered and shoved into a pit or it was someone who was deemed abnormal in some way so the body was not accorded the normal burial."

The 35-strong team started the archaeological dig of the site, the first in more than 75 years, at the end of last month.

They hoped to discover more about the history of the Roman town which is thought to have been established in the aftermath of Boudicca's rebellion of AD60/61 in which the Iceni tribe sacked Colchester,

London and St Albans before being defeated by the Romans.

As well as the newly-discovered remains, which will now go into storage for further tests, they have also identified activity dating right back to 10,000BC and the Iron Age.

Other material unearthed at the site, including coins and pottery, will also go through the testing process and ultimately will be part of an enhanced exhibition possibly at the Castle Museum.

Dr Bowden, whose team has kept a 24 hour presence at the site, said: "This strange burial has been certainly one of the most graphic things we have found. The bones are in good condition and we will get an enormous amount of information out of this individual in terms of diet, social class and whether it's someone local or from further afield.

"But we also now know the site has been the focus of human activity for millennia prior to the Romans."

This latest excavation, which follows digs between 1929 and 1935, has heightened public interest in the site with more than 2,100 people visiting over the last two weeks. It is expected hundreds more will visit the location this week, including school trips, before the archaeologists pack up their equipment on Saturday.

They will return again next summer to carry out more excavation work as part of the project which has been funded partly through the University of Nottingham and partly through Caistor Roman Project Ltd for the further three years.

■ COMMENT – Page 18

News

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Did Boudica live here?

ARCHAEOLOGISTS are set to unearth further secrets of a Roman town on the outskirts of Norwich – and are hoping to discover evidence linking the settlement to East Anglia's Iceni queen Boudica.

Channel 4's Time Team will be filming the excavations at Caistor St Edmund, which are the first within the Roman walls of the site for 75 years.

The Roman town of Venta Icenorum lies beneath the fields at the site but historians believe it might have been built on top of a previous Iceni settlement – perhaps even the home of the warrior queen Boudica.

Archaeologists will also be searching for clues to discover the exact date when the Roman streets were originally laid out and if the town continued to be occupied beyond the Roman period. Parts of the site were

originally excavated between 1929-1935 following the publication of dramatic aerial photographs showing the streets and public buildings.

The site was then left undisturbed until last year, when Dr Will Bowden and his team began excavating the field to the south of the town.

The remains of a 4th century Roman buried in a shallow grave was uncovered – but Dr Bowden, from the University of Nottingham, said he hoped to find evidence that a settlement was there before the Romans.

He said geophysical surveys had revealed possible prehistoric features beneath the town. He said: "We are reasonably confident that there was an Iron Age settlement here before the Romans and if we can find evidence of that it would go some way to being able to say something about what happened here."

"It might be that the Romans built on

top of a tribal centre as a means of repressing them, or it might have been built here because one of the tribal kings was friendly with the Romans. We just don't know. But if it is a major Iron Age settlement then it is certain that Boudica would have been aware of it, might have visited it or might even have lived here – we have no real idea."

The dig will start tomorrow and continue until Saturday, September 11, with visitors welcome to visit for free to watch the archaeologists in action. Visitors will also get the chance to see the full scale of the Roman site as the streets of the town will be painted in white on the grass, courtesy of former Norwich High School for Girls groundsman Fred Marsham.

The documentary being made by Tony Robinson and his Time Team crew is likely to be screened in the new year.



Right: Prof Will Bowden with a 4th Century AD skeleton found at last year's archaeology dig at Caistor Roman Town.



Left: The site of the Roman town of Venta Icenorum.

Pictures:
LIBRARY



Dr Will Bowden with the bowl that was discovered at the Caistor St Edmund archaeological dig.

Dig uncovers items from town's history

THOUSANDS of visitors have flocked to see an archaeological dig just outside Norwich.

The Caistor St Edmund dig was visited by 5,000 people in just three weeks, all eager to see the fascinating Roman artefacts it has uncovered.

Huge quantities of items have been found during the excavation and the most impressive is a whole late second century or early third century mixing bowl.

The pot has a spout for pouring and bears the scrapes and marks which show that it was used for some sort of mixing.

But it has a small hole in the centre, which archaeologists think could have been caused by normal wear or tear, or was perhaps deliberately made so it could be put into one of the deep pits in the site, in which many items have been found.

Will Bowden, the project director from the University of Nottingham, said: "When they excavated the site in the 1930s they found a lot of these pits containing complete vessels in them and this is what we are finding too.

"We think these pits have some kind of symbolic value, which is why people are putting things in the ground deliberately, because we don't think they are rubbish pits.

"In graves you do get these pots being 'killed', by putting a hole in them, to go with the deceased.

"But you can see that it is very worn so it could easily have been that someone put their pestle through the bottom of it and made the hole."

One of the trenches being excavated included part of a road in one corner of the site, near to the walls of the Roman town, which was called Venta Icenorum, meaning market place of the Iceni.

The road is believed to have been the main road, before it was cut off by the building of the town walls. In the same trench, deeper excavations have also shown a layer of dark soil in between what is believed to be courtyard surfaces, which the archaeological team thinks could show that there was a period when the town 'failed'.

When the town walls were built in about the late third century, the team then think there was an explosion of activity.

The dig team had hoped to find evidence linking the settlement to East Anglia's Iceni queen, Boudica, but other than "bits and pieces" there have been no substantial Iron Age finds.

The dig is the first inside the walls for 75 years. Last year excavations outside the walls uncovered the remains of a fourth-century Roman buried in a shallow grave.

TV presenter Tony Robinson has been filming the dig for a special Time Team programme for Channel 4, due to be aired next year.



The dig on the last day, with the public watching.

News

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Digging deep to uncover our past

They have been excavating for just a week, but already members of an archaeological team at a Roman town on the outskirts of Norwich have found "huge quantities" of artefacts.

KIM BRISCOE went to Caistor St Edmund to see the Roman town of Venta Icenorum unearthed.



PHOTO: JERRY DAWES

Channel 4's Time Team programme has helped to spark an interest in archaeology and, with a thousand visitors flocking to see the dig at Caistor St Edmund in its first week, that certainly seems to be the case in Norfolk.

Such is the scale of the excavation, that the Channel 4 programme's makers are filming it for a special show investigating the history of Caistor, the Romans and the Iceni.

The dig is the first to take place inside the walls of the town for 75 years and it is already uncovering more about how people in the town lived and worked.

The volume of writing implements being discovered shows that it was a thriving administrative centre, while the range of remains of animals unearthed makes archaeologists think that animals were being butchered within the town walls.

That would mark out the town as a very rural and agricultural place, as in many of the Roman urban centres animals were slaughtered outside the walls and then brought into the town.

Dr Will Bowden, pictured above, the project director from the University of Nottingham, said the volunteers who wash the finds were struggling to keep up, such was the volume of coins, pottery and bone

being found dating back to the second, third and fourth centuries.

He said: "We are finding all the different parts of an animal you could want, which shows they were butchering on site.

"That's been quite a nice discovery because you start to get an idea of how people were living and to build up a picture of what the town was like.

"Various things are emerging quite strongly and one is the amount of writing going on here.

"We are getting lots of styli, the pens used for writing on wax tablets. On a dig in the late 20s they found a lot of them too, so it is one of the things that keeps turning up at Caistor.

"It really is a centre of administration and people are writing a lot of things down, probably about taxation.

"We might talk about the Romans, but this was a local population who were living here.

"This would have been the Iceni population. By 200 years after the Roman invasion, everyone would have thought of themselves as being a Roman."

Visitors to the dig will also get the chance to see the full scale of the Roman site as the streets of the town have been

painstakingly painted in 14km of white lines on the grass, courtesy of former Norwich High School for Girls groundsman Fred Marsham.

The dig has uncovered a part of one of the Roman roads and jaw bones of cattle or horses, and parts of antlers can be seen embedded in the road. Dark strips show where wheel ruts were made by travelling vehicles.

But over the next couple of weeks, the team is planning to dig deeper and see if they can discover evidence linking the settlement to East Anglia's Iceni queen Boudica.

Archaeologists will also be searching for clues to discover the exact date when the Roman streets were originally laid out and if the town continued to be occupied beyond the Roman period.

Parts of the site were originally excavated between 1929 and 1935 following the publication of dramatic aerial photographs showing evidence of streets and public buildings.

Since then, the site was left undisturbed, until last year when Dr Bowden and his team began excavating the field to the south of the town, which is a scheduled ancient monument owned by the Norfolk Archaeological Trust and

managed in partnership with South Norfolk Council. On that occasion, the remains of a fourth century Roman buried in a shallow grave were uncovered.

Dr Bowden, who also worked on the archaeological dig during the building of Castle Mall, said: "I did my PhD at the University of East Anglia and I used to pass this on the train. I could see what a brilliant site it was and how you could answer so many questions by digging here.

"This sort of site is very rare in Europe, as there are very few Roman towns that don't have modern settlements built on top of them.

"Roman towns were often built in good locations, but this wasn't the case there. The better location for the town was Norwich, because it has much better access by river, and that's a good result for us."

The dig will continue until Saturday, September 11, with people welcome to visit for free to watch the archaeologists in action.

→ Follow the dig team's blog at <http://caistordig2010.wordpress.com/>.

→ Do you have a story for the Evening News? Contact reporter Kim Briscoe on 01603 772419 or email kim.briscoe@archant.co.uk



Hunt for Boudica to hit TV screens

She is revered as one of the greatest and most fearsome female warriors in history. Boudica, Queen of the Iceni. And archaeologists hoped to find out more about the East Anglian warrior queen and her tribe when they carried out excavations at a field just south of Norwich last summer.

The Roman town of Venta Icenorum, which means market of the Iceni, lies beneath the fields at Caistor St Edmund and made national headlines in 1929.

That was when dramatic aerial photographs showing streets and public buildings were published in the national press, catapulting Caistor St Edmund into the public eye.

Excavations took place between 1929 and 1935, but last summer archaeologists returned to the site hoping to find evidence dating back before the Romans... to Boudica's Iceni tribe.

The tribe used to make exquisite torcs, jewellery that required metalworking skills more advanced than anywhere else in the world, and they left behind some of the greatest treasures of prehistory such as the Snettisham Hoard displayed at Norwich Castle Museum.

When the Romans threatened their way of life, the tribe dared to take on the full might of the Roman Empire. But the tribe's revolt in 60AD failed and as Boudica disappeared from history, so did the Iceni.

Archaeologists, headed up by Dr Will Bowden from the University of Nottingham, hoped to find evidence of the tribe in excavations at Caistor St Edmund last August.

They were hoping to find clues that the Roman town was built on top of the earlier Iceni settlement to punish Boudica's tribe for their rebellion.

On Wednesday, May 4, television viewers can find out what they discovered, because Channel 4's Time Team were in tow.

The team, including Tony Robinson, joined Dr Bowden at the dig last summer, which was visited by more than 5,000 members of the public.

The Time Team Special features a recreation of the historic aerial flights and experts discussing the remarkable rebellion by the Iceni and the wonderful



Unearthing secrets: Dr Will Bowden with Tony Robinson of Channel 4's Time Team. Below, a statue of Boudica and an aerial reconstruction of events from 1929.



treasures they created. Dr Bowden said: "It was good fun. There's a lot of organisation about field excavations and it always feels a bit like being a ringmaster at a circus, so having the film crew there added another element to that. "Time Team always evokes

strong emotions among archaeologists. Some think it is great but some think it's the worst thing to happen to archaeology.

"But I think most people found it very interesting to see how television is made.

"The good thing about Time

Team, compared to some of the other TV companies which wanted to film, is that the others wanted to know what we would find before we started digging, whereas Time Team know archaeology doesn't work like that.

"I will be interested to see how they tell the story, because we were imagining what we would find and we ended up finding something different to what we originally thought we might."

While viewers will have to watch the programme to find out what is unearthed, Dr Bowden said the discoveries had led to new interpretations about the town.

He said: "One of the most interesting things from our point of view is that the founding of the town probably now needs to be dated later. It was long considered it was founded in about 70AD after the rebellion, but it seems the town is later than that, maybe 120AD. That is starting to change the story of Caistor St Edmund and the way we see it."

Dr Bowden is hoping that his team can return to Caistor St Edmund this summer, where they hope to carry out excavation work on the forum, in the centre of the walled town.

→ Boudica's Lost Tribe: A Time Team Special will be screened at 9pm on Channel 4 on Wednesday, May 4.

Dan Grimmer

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Excavations open to the public at Caistor St Edmund Roman town, near Norwich, this weekend

David Bale Tuesday, August 9, 2011
12.07 PM

Excavations at the Roman town of Venta Icenorum, Caistor St Edmund, near Norwich, will be open to the public this weekend.

They will be led by Dr Will Bowden, Associate Professor of Roman Archaeology at the University of Nottingham, and follow the successful 2010 season, which was filmed for a BBC Time Team special.

Starting this Saturday, Dr Bowden and his team will be excavating parts of the Roman forum that was first discovered during the 1929-35 excavations.

They hope to find out when the forum was built and what happened to it in the later Roman period.

The 1930s excavators thought that it was destroyed by fire and lay in ruins for around 100 years before being rebuilt. The new excavations will look for further evidence of this blaze.

The team will also be digging in the north-west of the town, looking for signs of what happened at Caistor after the Roman period and trying to find out whether the walled town was occupied during the AngloSaxon period, before it was eventually overshadowed by the rise of Norwich.

South Norfolk Councillor Laura Webster, who sits on the influential Caistor Roman Town Joint Advisory Board said: "We are looking forward to this new and exciting excavation at Caistor. It will unveil more about our fascinating local history and importantly give families the chance to learn about our region's extraordinary past.

"There are family events being organised for this summer as well as free tours, and I urge everyone who has a chance to go along.

"We remain committed to protecting and exploring this ancient site, one of the most significant in Britain, and ensuring the wider community benefits from the amazing work going on there."

The site is now a Scheduled Ancient Monument owned by the Norfolk Archaeological Trust and managed in partnership with South Norfolk Council.

In addition the project will be running two family activity days on August 21 and 28, in association with BBC Hands on History – Dig! (bbc.co.uk/history/handsonhistory).

Funding for the new project has been raised partly through the University of Nottingham and partly through Caistor Roman Project Ltd, a charitable company set up to help the work.

The excavations are open to the public seven days a week from August 13 until September 3.

For other information on the season and the project see www.caistorromanproject.com.

You can follow the excavation blog at <http://caistordig2011.wordpress.com/> or keep updated on Twitter by following @willbowden1 or #Caistor).

Have you organised an event celebrating Norwich's history? Call reporter David Bale on 01603 772427 or email david.bale2@archant.co.uk.

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Unearthing the past: Members of the public view the excavations at Caistor St Edmund Roman town during a public dig day. Inset right, an aerial view of an excavation at Caistor St Edmund.
PHOTOS: SIMON FINLAY AND MIKE PAGE

Hunt is on for more of site's lost treasures



Archaeologists are revisiting the site of Venta Icenorum, in Caistor St Edmund, in the hope of uncovering more secrets from the Roman town on the outskirts of Norwich.

The excavations will begin on August 11, once again being led by Dr Will Bowden from the University of Nottingham, and lasting until September 1.

Last year saw tremendous success for Dr Bowden and his team, as they focused on the forum in the site, which would have been the centre of all activity.

They discovered the remnants of a group of buildings that pre-dated the forum, which would have been made of timber and clay, but there was evidence that these had been burnt down in a catastrophic fire before the forum had even been built.

Further discoveries showed that the forum had initially been abandoned by its inhabitants, but had then been rebuilt. Dr Bowden said: "This places

Caistor in a position of major political importance".

After last year's success the team have decided to cover a much wider circuit this year, digging across the river next to the site. They were able to obtain this land through a grant supplied by the National Archaeology Trust and have high hopes for the excavations.

Dr Bowden is very aware of the support he has received from local businesses in Norfolk, naming May Gurney, A-Plant and Broadland Environmental Services as particularly helpful.

He said: "The great thing about this project is the support from local businesses. We would not have been able to extend the circuit without the bridge supplied, for example".

The site is open to members of the public from August 11, between 9.30am and 5pm, seven days a week. The site will also be hosting a family weekend

on August 18 and 19; Dr Bowden places emphasis on his great team of volunteers saying: "They will always be available to give a guided tour".

Other activities available on the family weekend will include an excavation for the children, a talk by a Roman soldier, a guest appearance from a Roman potter and Boudican war cries.

Parts of the site were originally excavated between 1929 and 1935 following the publication of dramatic aerial photographs showing evidence of streets and public buildings, but it was left undisturbed until Dr Bowden's digs began three years ago. The site is now a Scheduled Ancient Monument owned by the Norfolk Archaeological Trust and managed in partnership with South Norfolk Council.

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DIG: Will Bowden, at work with Hazel Massey, one of the volunteer archaeologists at Caistor St Edmund.

CAISTOR ST EDMUND

Digging deep into life in a Roman town

Archaeologists investigating around the site of the Roman town at Caistor St Edmund broke ground on a three-week dig at the weekend.

The team will be digging in two trenches outside the town walls of Venta Icenorum, hoping to uncover more of the historical secrets hidden just 18 inches

down in fields to the south and east of the town.

Will Bowden, of the University of Nottingham, who is leading the team, said the dig could reveal how the site was inhabited after the Roman period, following on from discoveries of Anglo-Saxon cemeteries nearby.

“We could find evidence of the

Anglo-Saxon occupation, and what happened once the Roman town went out of use. We know where the people were when they were dead, but we don’t know where they were when they were alive,” he said.

The dig is open to the public, and an exhibition has been set up by the Norfolk Archaeological Trust.

Skeleton found at Roman town

A team working near the site of the Roman town at Caistor St Edmund has made a gruesome first find: human remains.

A headless skeleton thought to date to Anglo-Saxon times was uncovered by archaeologists during the first days of a three-week dig outside the walls of Venta Icenorum.

Experts believe the head of the body, which may have been of a woman, could have been removed during ploughing of the field because of the unusual shallowness of the grave.

The team had to wait for clearance from the Ministry of Justice to remove the bones yesterday, and they will be analysed before being reburied.

Dr Will Bowden, who is leading the project, said: "We think the skeleton is late Roman or Anglo-Saxon, and probably of a fairly small adult, possibly female.

"The bones are so fragmented it's really very difficult to tell, but it's looking like an isolated burial. We will study them as much as we can, and see



New find: Dave Griffiths and Lynda Bradley uncover the skeleton at Caistor St Edmund.

PHOTO: DENISE BRADLEY

what information we can get." Dr Bowden said the dig, which is being carried out in association with the Norfolk Archaeological Trust, had also revealed "tantalising" clues to Caistor's occupation in the post-Roman period, including parts of timber structures hinting at agricultural or domestic settlement.

Discovering definite signs of an Anglo-Saxon settlement would be "really important", he added.

"I wouldn't put bet my house on it, but it's looking pretty promising," he said.

"None of the other greenfield towns in England have this late occupation. It will be a unique thing to have a confirmed Saxon presence at one of them.

"If we have definitely isolated it, it really adds to our knowledge of Roman Britain as a whole."

→ The dig is holding a family fun day today and tomorrow, with activities including guided tours, children's excavations and dressing up fun. The site is open from 9.30am until 5pm.

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Back in time to the days of the Romans

Scores of youngsters visited the site of a Roman town near Norwich across the weekend as work continued to unearth the site's

history. The Caistor Roman Project aims to understand the rise and fall of Venta Icenorum, which is buried beneath the fields at Caistor St Edmund.

A family weekend was held at the site on Saturday and yesterday, with face-painting, dressing in togas and

Boudica war cries among the activities.

Andrew Ray, of the project, said yesterday: "It's gone very well. We've had a good attendance, particularly with the children's events."

PHOTO: BILL SMITH



Archaeologists uncover Anglo-Saxon settlement

Emma Knights

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Excavation work by the site of the Roman town at Caistor St Edmund, near Norwich, has uncovered evidence of an Anglo-Saxon settlement.

The 2012 Caistor Dig took place during the summer outside the walls of the Roman town Venta Icenorum, and the team of experts and volunteers was led by Dr Will Bowden in association with Norfolk Archaeological Trust.

He explained: "This year we were primarily looking for two things. Firstly the Anglo-Saxon occupation of the town, what happened in the town after the Roman period, in this crucial period between the end of the Roman town and the rise of Norwich.

"We found some shapes from aerial photography which looked like they might be Saxon buildings and so we followed those. We dug a trench over the top of one of them and there it was, which was very satisfying.

"The really important thing about this is that we always knew there was an Anglo-Saxon presence around there, because we have the cemetery, but we never knew where people were actually living.

"We found it in an area just across the River Tas. This is the area that the Norfolk Archaeological Trust has recently bought – Dunston Field – and one of the reasons for raising the money for that land was that it was thought that is where there was Anglo-Saxon settlement, and now we have actually proved it."

He said the type of building they found evidence of was a "sunken featured building" which was similar to those recreated at West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village.

"They would have been small wooden buildings, very different to the sorts of things they had in the Roman period," he explained.

"They dug big holes which had suspended floors above them, and these left very distinctive marks in the ground."

He added: "We excavated one building but geophysics shows a number of other likely structures there too."

He said the second part of



Unearthed: Evidence uncovered of an Anglo-Saxon building at Caistor St Edmund. Below, one of the skeletons found there.

MAKIN PHOTO: MIKE PAGE

Dr Bowden's blog

In an online blog Dr Bowden sums up the findings over the past four years.

He said: "After four years we have really changed our understanding of Caistor. It's changed from being a simple Roman entity, put in place after the Boudican rebellion, to something much more complex. "Caistor followed its own path, "doing different" as they say in Norfolk, and was as much a town of the Icen as it was a Roman town.

"We've shown how it developed gradually (rather than the street grid all being laid out at once) and showed how it reached its zenith in the late Roman period, when it was the focus of intensive activity in the 4th century and when a new forum was laid out on the levelled ruins of the first forum which had been abandoned 100 years previously. "We've also conclusively located Anglo-Saxon occupation adjacent to the town, which really justifies the Norfolk Archaeological Trust's purchase of Dunston Field. Finally, we've called into question the navigability of the River Tas, previously a cornerstone in all discussion of the Roman town."

→ For more visit caistordig2012.wordpress.com/ and www.caistorromanproject.org



this year's dig, which finished at the beginning of September, involved looking at the defences of the Roman town. These are a great series of ditches that ran around the town, and which show it was at one time a much, much larger area than what can be seen today.

At two points during the dig skeletons were discovered, both believed to be from the late Roman period.

The first skeleton, thought likely to be female, was discovered early on in a shallow grave and it was thought it had been hit with a plough at some point because the skeleton was headless and skull fragments were found nearby.

The second skeleton was found towards the end of the dig, deeper in the ground in part of the Roman defences.

Dr Bowden said it was not yet clear if the skeleton was male

or female because the pelvis was broken into several pieces.

He said: "As yet we have still got to do the analysis on the bones. It does not seem to have been in a formal grave, probably the body was thrown into the ditch and covered up. It must have been covered fairly early on because it still had all its extremities, its fingers and toes."

The area around Venta Icenorum has been the subject of digs for a number of years, and Dr Bowden said in the future they planned to do work on the surrounding landscape to understand how the town changed, and that this was likely to take the form of field surveys and small excavations. → Are you involved in a new heritage project? Call reporter Emma Knights on 01603 772428 or email emma.knights@archant.co.uk



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local **NEWS**



■ Teams of volunteers digging around the modern village of Caistor St Edmund, near Norwich, close to the Roman town of Venta Icenorum to understand the extent of the settlement.

Pictures: STEVE ADAMS

A town with history

The Roman town of Venta Icenorum is the Romano-British predecessor of the modern city of Norwich. Founded during the AD60s at Caistor St Edmund, this was the largest and most important Roman centre of northern East Anglia. The Latin name means "marketplace of the Iceni". It became the Roman administrative base for the area of Norfolk, northern Suffolk and eastern Cambridgeshire. Along with Silchester, in Hampshire, and Wroxeter, in Shropshire, Venta Icenorum is one of only three major Romano-British towns which have not been buried or destroyed by medieval and modern towns and cities. The Norfolk Archaeological Trust has owned the defended area of the town since 1984, and has acquired much surrounding land since that date with the aim of protecting and conserving the monument.

Dan Grimmer

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With a Roman town buried beneath a field on their doorsteps, villagers in Caistor St Edmund have grown used to visiting archaeologists searching for secrets of the past.

But the excavations have now moved even closer to home, with experts digging up villagers' gardens to hunt for vital clues to how far the Roman town of Venta Icenorum stretched.

Householders in various places around the village agreed to allow the trowels to be turned on their gardens to look for evidence of the settlement's range.

Teams of more than 20 volunteers have been digging, examining, washing and recording finds, taking a day to complete each one metre square pit.

And Giles Emery, from Norvic Archaeology, said: "People see the field and the walls and think that's the town, but the settlement actually extends further than that and in different directions.

"Thanks to the generosity of people living in the village, we've been able to investigate that through test pits in their gardens – places which have not been tested before.

"We've been finding out what's been buried there, which people have been walking across for all these years without knowing what was below their feet."

Mr Emery said the results had been good. He said: "We've seen a lot of Roman pottery in the area to the north-east of the town, which is where the Roman road was, so it looks like the settlement extended along that.

"We've had fragments of glassware, which we're quite excited about as it's possible that some of that was manufactured in the town.

"There's evidence of metalwork as well, and we've found some prehistoric flints, which makes you wonder just how long this site was occupied."

Mr Emery said volunteers Mike Pinner and Chrissy Sullivan had done an excellent job of knocking on

Long ago there were Romans at the bottom of our gardens



“We’ve been finding out what’s been buried there

Giles Emery

doors asking villagers if they were happy for archaeologists to dig up their lawns.

The excavations, which have been paid for thanks to a £10,000 Heritage Lottery Fund grant, will continue for the rest of this week and could carry on beyond that.

The project also includes a group of volunteers researching the history of Caistor St Edmund and a group who are interviewing people to build up an oral history of the village.

Parts of the Venta Icenorum site

was originally excavated between 1929 and 1935, following the publication of dramatic aerial photographs showing evidence of streets and public buildings, which made national newspaper headlines.

Fresh excavations started in 2009, led by Dr Will Bowden, from the University of Nottingham. Those excavations uncovered fresh detail about the site.

Among their finds were the remains of a seemingly unique Roman building, an Anglo-Saxon building, a headless skeleton and another skeleton which had placed in a shallow grave.

■ **Have you made an interesting archaeological discovery? Call Dan Grimmer on 01603 772375 or email dan.grimmer@archant.co.uk**

■ Steve Hunt from Shadingfield, near Beccles, who started off as a volunteer for but now works in archaeology, with two fellow volunteers. Inset left, what is thought to be a delicate Roman pin, which was unearthed from one of the test pits over Easter.

Pictures: TARA GREAVES



Volunteers uncover secrets of Norfolk's Roman past

TARA GREAVES meets the community-based team uncovering new secrets about the ancient Romans who once made Norfolk their home.

chairman, said: "What has become apparent in the last year or two, bearing in mind the Caistor Roman Project has been in existence for several years, was that we needed to take more local control."

Since 2006, the project has been led by Will Bowden, associate professor in Roman archaeology at The University of Nottingham, working with the Norfolk Archaeological Trust, which owns the site, and a willing group of volunteers.

"Nottingham is a long way away and there was a lot of things we felt we could do locally without troubling him, which would also be very good for our volunteers and the local community. Will, who remains director of the project, is completely behind what we are trying to do, as is the Norfolk Archaeological Trust," added Mr Pask. The last big

excavations took place between 2009 and 2012 and attracted more than 200 volunteers and about 15,000 visitors, as well as discovering much about the town, Venta Icenorum (to give it its Latin name).

Among the finds were a palaeolithic hand-axe, which pre-dates the Roman period by thousands of years, a headless skeleton and another placed in a shallow grave.

After the main excavations ended, volunteers continued with the behind-the-scenes tasks until, with the support of Dr Bowden, they applied for and were awarded a grant of £10,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to go beyond the confines of the original Roman town.

It is thought that it was only in the last 150-200 years of Roman

occupation that people lived within the walls of the town – as the threat from overseas increased – which means there could be still much to be discovered beyond them, and not just from that period in history.

Mr Pask, former chief executive of the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk, added: "We know quite a lot about what went on within the walls as there has been a lot of interest over the years but what we want to do now is explore outside the walls."

The first strand of the funding has been used to train volunteers and throughout the last year workshops have been held to develop the techniques to enable the group to control the total process.

This starts with site identification and goes through to the publication of results on the national database, via geophysical "geophys" surveys, excavation techniques, the complex paperwork involved in recording each dig, and the post-excavation tasks of cleaning and identifying the finds. The group has been

mentored during this process by Giles Emery, a Norwich-based archaeologist.

The second strand of the funding is being used for community involvement, with householders in the village being asked to open up their gardens for one-metre test pits.

Last year there were 20 completed and this year they have another 20 lined up for investigation, with work getting under way at the start of this month.

Other lines of research involved getting audio recordings of the villagers' recollections of Caistor's past, and looking into the history of the village during the two world wars, as well as a complete press cuttings record of the Roman town excavations.

Former Lowestoft-based head teacher Mike Pinner, who first became interested in archaeology as a 14 year old, has taken on the role of project manager.

"I think everyone first starts because they want to find things but after you have been doing it a while

For many, the initial draw is the hope of unearthing something remarkable but knowing whether that tiny piece of muddy pottery is buried treasure requires knowledge.

And that is what is being offered as the Caistor Roman Project enters its next phase, with many of its volunteers being trained to professional archaeological standards.

The new initiative is just one of a number of changes to allow the continuing success of the group, which has also included putting a formal organisational structure in place and shifting its focus.

Volunteers are now venturing "beyond the walls" of the well-known Roman town, on the outskirts of Caistor St Edmund, where the project began – and even into peoples' gardens – in a bid to discover what is still to be found in this fascinating area of the Tas Valley.

Alan Pask, the project's new



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FEATURE



From builder to archaeologist

Steve Hunt, 40, was a builder who enjoyed metal detecting as a hobby when he first volunteered for the project but he liked it so much he has since made archaeology his career.

"I saw that the Caistor Roman Project was looking for volunteers in 2009 and decided to give it a go," said Mr Hunt, who lives in Shadingfield, near Beccles.

As he gained experience and made contacts, he decided to take things further and now works as a project assistant in the field for NPS, which has its head office in Norwich.

Steve added: "I think everyone is hoping for a big find but my



interests have changed over the years. I enjoy discovering the context of when it came from and what it was used for as much as the find."



■ Above, Volunteers from the Caistor Roman Project enjoying a breather at the nearby Caistor Hall Hotel, in the company of manager Komal Sharma (centre).

■ Left, Some of the finds from one of the test pits in the Wymer Field which will be taken to the project's headquarters and cleaned up.

■ Below, Mike Pinner (left), project manager and Alan Pask, chairman of the Caistor Roman Project.

Pictures: TARA GREAVES/
SUBMITTED



you realise that it has little value unless you know where it came from."

Mr Pinner believes the volunteers, who range in age from 15 to 85, have particularly enjoyed the chance to increase their knowledge.

"We have about 40 volunteers that work with us and they all do different things.

"Some sift the earth, others draw the trenches and then others wash and sort back at our headquarters," he said.

Over the Easter holiday, teams of volunteers were working on test pits in an area known as the Wymer Field at what is the start of the new digging season – although while the warmer months are used for this type of work, there are things to do

all year round. Mr Pinner said: "We've discovered a lot of metal slag [the refuse which is left after smelting] and if I had to guess what this area was used for I would say a metal works.

"If you think about it, if you were a Roman and you had a nice little town you probably wouldn't want it polluted by industry so this seems like a good site for it."

Using the nearby Caistor Hall Hotel as base, the volunteers put their newly-learned skills to good use over several days, with some interesting finds, including what appears to be a delicate Roman pin.

There was also what is suspected be a Bronze Age piece of pot, which could clearly be seen to have been marked with a stick or such like to

create a pattern when the clay was still wet.

Mr Pask believes the changes to the project's set-up – particularly the new emphasis on it being community-based – has brought a fresh energy to the group.

Together with a basic committee, new trustees have been appointed to help with fundraising – with several successful events already held – and administration tasks.

From working on a unique project, the group has developed into something larger with far-reaching and ambitious future plans. Mr Pask said he would like to encourage more people to join in and added: "The project needs more like-minded people of all ages to help with this absorbing task. New members are

always welcome."

So if you are fed-up of watching re-runs of Time Team on television and itching to give archaeology a go – the Caistor Roman Project could be just what you are looking for.

→ Visit the project website, www.caistorromanproject.org, for more details of up and coming events and digs and for details of how to become a member. There is also a Caistor Roman Project page on Facebook.