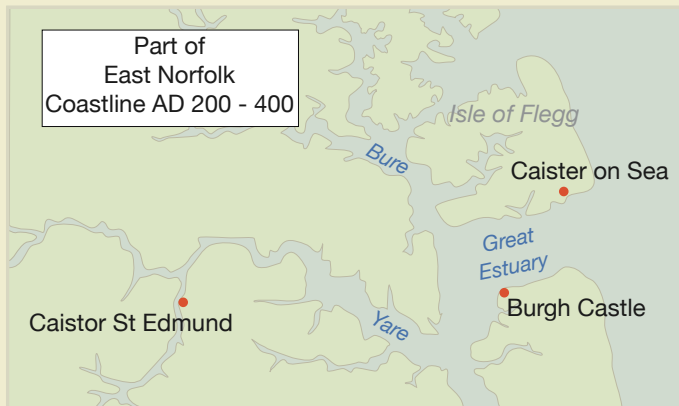


Roman Caister

When the Romans began their conquest of Britain in AD 43, the Caister area would have been inhabited by small-scale farming communities. These Late Iron Age people, over a number of decades, slowly began to use the developing Roman markets to access new materials and goods. The arrival of these new markets, urban centres and a new religion, eventually gave rise to a blended Romano-British culture and society.

At the Beauchamp Grange estate, to the immediate north of the parish, evidence of these 1st-century transitional farming communities was found during an archaeological excavation.



The great-grandchildren of the Beauchamp Grange farmers would have likely witnessed the arrival of the Roman military in Caister around AD 200, when they began constructing a fort. This fort was located at the edge of a large estuary and was most likely built to control and facilitate trade and taxation. It likely developed a more defensive function when there was an increase in coastal raiding during the late third century. It was around this time that the fort at Burgh Castle was constructed to guard the other side of the estuary.

Part 1

Roman Caister

Most of the Roman fort is now covered by housing, although a small, excavated part can still be seen today, just off Norwich Road. Visitors can view the defensive ditch, the foundations of the fort wall, a guard chamber, building with a heated floor and what was the main road through the fort. An amazing array of artefacts was recovered during its excavation in the 1950's, including imported pottery, coins, military items, and brooches.



Roman silver denarius coin of Julia Maesa from Caister-on-Sea
Courtesy: © Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service

Outside the fort, a civilian settlement developed where traders, shops and inns were most likely located. Serving soldiers would have spent their wages here and this area is also where the families of the soldiers, the traders and local farmers would have lived. Archaeological excavations at the site of the Lidl supermarket and The Old Hall leisure centre investigated parts of this settlement and explored the remains of property boundaries and rubbish pits.

Evidence suggests the fort went out of use in the late 4th century. It is not known why, but this was a period of social and economic struggle for the Roman administration in Britain. The civilian settlement surrounding the fort would have quickly disappeared in the absence of the military, and it appears that Anglo-Saxon communities soon began to settle in the parish.

Part 2