

## JOHN HURST DISSERTATION PRIZE 2013

In 2004, the *Medieval Settlement Research Group* announced the launch of a prize, set up in honour of the late John Hurst, who did so much to promote the field of medieval archaeology and in particular the study of medieval settlement. To encourage new and young scholars in the field, an annual prize of £200 is offered to graduate students for the best Masters dissertation on any theme in the field of medieval settlement and landscape in Britain and Ireland (c. AD 400–1600). Directors of Masters courses in Archaeology, English Local History, Landscape Studies and related fields are invited to submit high-quality completed dissertations for consideration by the MSRSG Committee. For the 2013 award, we are delighted to announce that the prize winner is Krissy Moore, whose dissertation as part of her MA in Landscape Archaeology at the University of Sheffield comprised a detailed archaeological investigation and analysis of a former Roman small town and its immediate hinterland. The following article presents an extended summary of this research.

### A REASSESSMENT OF THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF CAISTOR, WEST LINDSEY, LINCOLNSHIRE, FROM THE 4TH TO THE 11TH CENTURIES

By KRISSY ELLEN MOORE

#### Introduction

Caistor is a small market town in West Lindsey, Lincolnshire, built over the remains of a small fourth century fortified settlement, not a fort as the name (from the Old English *ceaster*) suggests. The interior of the fourth century town as plotted by Philip Rahtz (1960), excluding all permanent buildings, is a Scheduled Ancient Monument [HER MLI54186 / SAM 148]. Rahtz' 1959 excavation identified buried foundations at the southwest corner and the layout he extrapolated, based on earlier discoveries of walls and bastions and detailed survey of the town's microtopography, has since been confirmed in a number of small-scale development-led assessments (Clarke 1993, 1994; Daley 2005; Field 1992; Masters 2003; Munford 2004a, 2004b; Rylatt 2003). Caistor's location, antiquity, and its relatively large yet unsynthesised body of grey literature, make it a suitable subject for research in terms of identifying what level of archaeology exists inside and outside the town and asking what types of analysis can be applied to the site and environs to chart its contents and development since the Roman period.

#### Aims

The research presented in this paper reviewed Caistor's archaeological literature in order to answer questions about identity, continuity and change in early medieval England. The 'lifespan' of the Roman enclosure provided a chronological frame for these inquiries. The wall stood from the 4th to the 11th centuries, bracketing crucial periods in early medieval history: the organisation of post-Roman territories in the 4th to 6th centuries, and the development of medieval religious and secular power structures in the 7th to 11th centuries, including the period of Scandinavian conquest and settlement. Framing the research in this manner also allowed the project to explore regional research themes on the Anglo-Saxon reuse of late Roman walled towns

and lesser walled towns (Vince 2006) and the origin of medieval market towns (Lewis 2006). This research used a GIS-based landscape archaeology approach, a review of the grey literature, and a targeted programme of resistivity survey. This combination of approaches allowed Caistor to be investigated at the 'landscape' and 'townscape' scales, while addressing three core research questions:

1. What functions did the walled town at Caistor serve, how did these functions change over time, and how did this relate to broader changes occurring in Lincolnshire in the 4th to 11th centuries?
2. How are these broader changes reflected in the spatial patterning of archaeological material in a 10km region around Caistor?
3. Can a resistivity survey of targeted areas generate new data on the survival of archaeological material in unexcavated areas of Caistor?

In addition this research sought to involve the residents of Caistor in fieldwork and reporting, by seeking their knowledge of Caistor's archaeology as they have encountered it, acknowledging their contributions, and sharing the results.

#### Background

Caistor lies at a strategic position between ancient travel routes and the resource bases of the Clay Vale and the Lincolnshire Wolds. It is on the route of the ancient north-south trackway High Street, between the Barton Street trackway to the east and Ermine Street, the main Roman route to London, to the west. High Street follows the ridge of the Chalk Cliff near the boundary between the Lincolnshire Wolds to the east and the Clay Vale to the west (Figure 1). These areas are distinguished by different geology, topography, soils and resources. In brief, the Wolds are better suited for mixed agriculture and pastoralism and the Vale for agriculture. Although distant

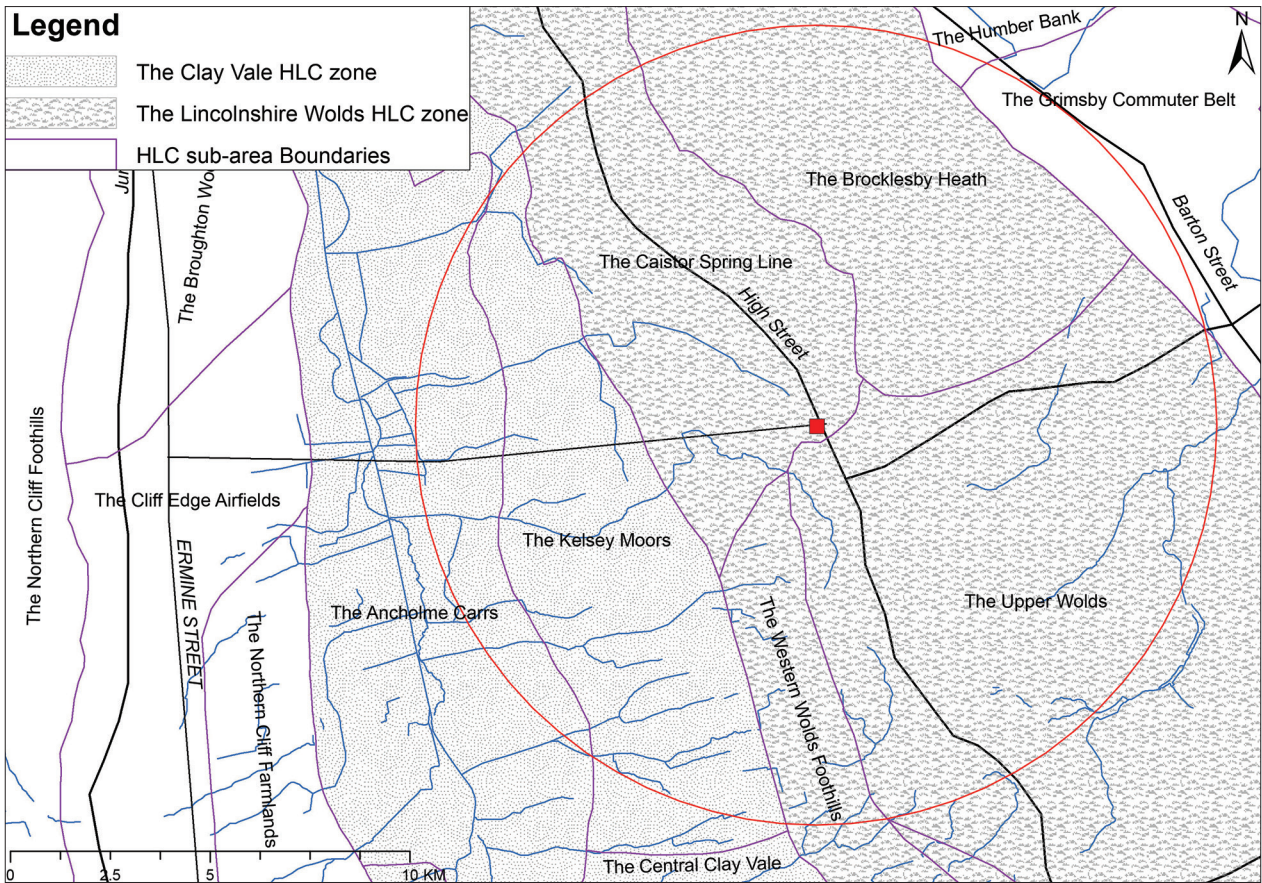


Figure 1 Caistor (indicated by red square) and its location relative to surrounding landscape zones or Historic Landscape Characterisation zones.

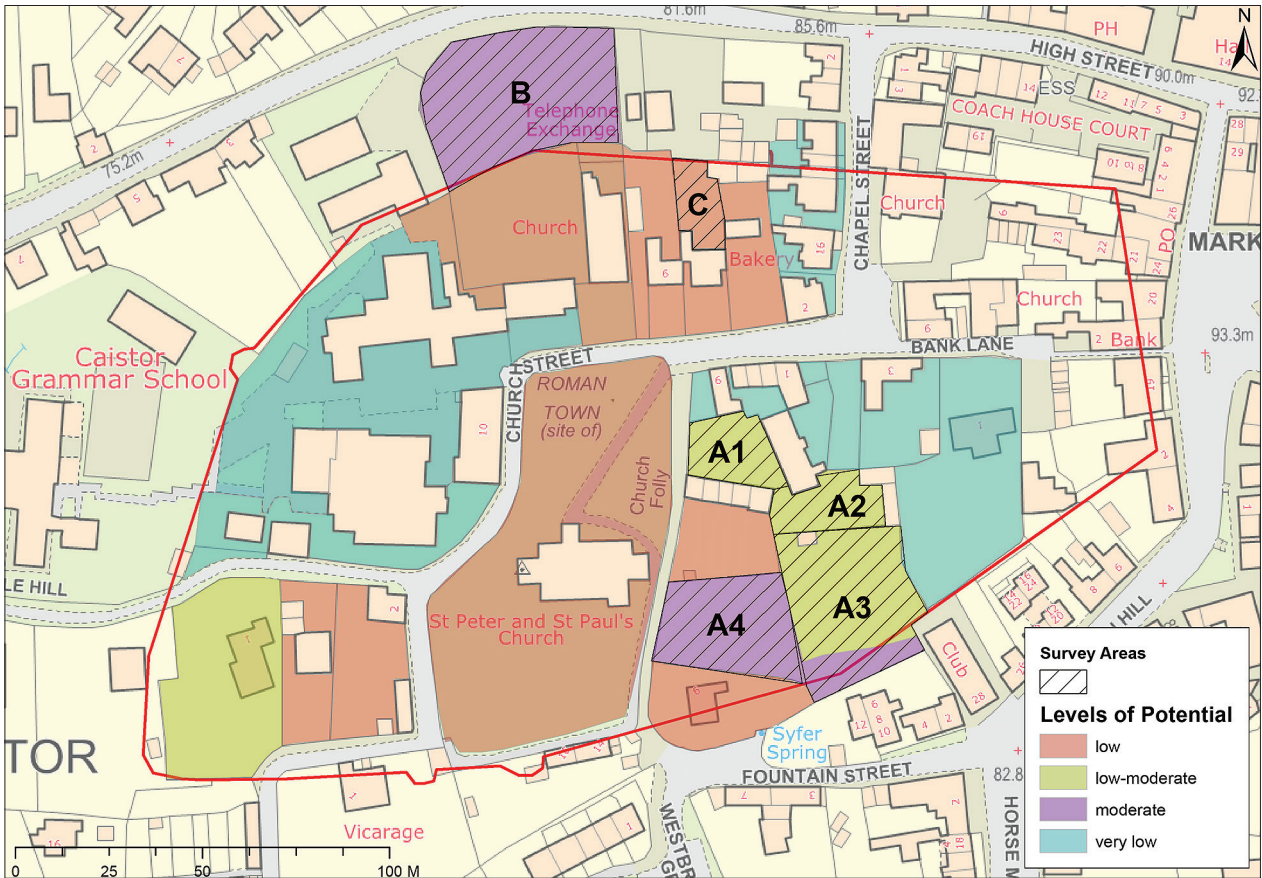


Figure 2 The enclosure outline (after Rahtz 1960) overlaid over an OS Map of Caistor, with areas identified for geophysical survey through map regression analyses and archival research highlighted. (Crown copyright/database right 2014. An Ordnance Survey/Edina supplied service).

from any rivers, Caistor has three perpetually upwelling springs: Syfer Spring, Pigeon Spring and a spring near the Church of SS Peter and Paul to which folklore attributes healing qualities (Gutch and Peacock 1908).

The enclosure is an irregular polygon measuring 160m by 255m, and its outline follows the irregular topography of the chalk cliff promontory upon which it is built (see Figure 2). The topography, the enclosure, and presumed medieval and post-medieval terracing has left the enclosure area as a raised area extending eastwards from Caistor Market Place. This area is occupied by the Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul and its cemetery, Caistor Grammar School, and residences along Church Lane and Bank Lane; the enclosure area is bounded by allotments to the north, Caistor Grammar School grounds to the west, and residences and the town centre on the south and east. The area's protected status restricts most archaeological investigation to test pits and watching briefs, with the exception of the large developer-driven excavations at 16 High Street in 2009–2012 (Munford 2004a). However, residents often encounter the enclosure's past, as potsherds turned up while gardening (Mr & Miss Palmer, pers. comm., June 2012) and family stories of skeletons encountered whilst digging air-raid shelters (Mr & Mrs Wood, pers. comm., June 2012).

### **Theoretical background: the landscape approach and questions in early medieval archaeology**

Caistor's location and multi-layered occupation history make it suited for a landscape-based investigation. There is no single "landscape archaeology" as the approach is constantly being tested and developed (Anschuetz, Wilshusen & Schieck 2001) but core elements include the acceptance that past behaviour can be inferred from spatial patterning of artefacts and sites (Cowgill 1993; Winterbottom & Long 2006) and that these patterns are best investigated through a multidisciplinary approach incorporating the geological and topographical data of a "space" alongside the socially-constructed "place" defined by human perception (e.g. Casey 2008; Ingold 1993). This approach has met success with prehistoric archaeology (e.g. eds. Graves McEwan & Millican 2012) but is relatively untested on early medieval landscapes. This dissertation used a landscape-based approach to reassess Caistor's archaeological record and discuss identity, continuity and change in Caistor throughout the early medieval period.

The genetic descent of communities identified through material culture as 'Romano-British' or 'Anglo-Saxon' is almost impossible to determine. However, the identity that these people chose to express through material culture offers much potential for discussion. When the distributions of particular material culture types are associated with particular types of land-use, "ethnic landscapes" and their boundaries can also be identified (Anschuetz et al 2001; Reynolds 2003). For example, the large 5th-century Anglo-Saxon cremation cemeteries avoid Lincoln entirely, the closest being 17 miles away, and Green (2012: 62) argues that this reflects the survival of a British authority at Lincoln that prevented Anglo-Saxon groups from settling in that area. Sixth- and 7th-century cemeteries do not respect this boundary,

suggesting a decline in British influence and more people either continuing or adopting Anglo-Saxon funerary habits. Settlement patterns are harder to interpret based on the available evidence. On the Lincolnshire Wolds, both Romano-British settlements and early Anglo-Saxon settlements share a similar dispersed pattern (Bennet 2002; Hooke 1998). This difficulty in distinguishing "ethnic landscape" boundaries in rural Lindsey may suggest either coexistence, as new arrivals adopted local settlement patterns while natives took on new material culture, or continuity in rural non-elite settlement with the adoption of new identities and material culture as the broader cultural context changed. It is likely that continuity of rural and (in at least the case of Lincoln) urban occupation occurred alongside changes in identity.

Continuity in a town's function – as institutional centre, seat of production, transport and commercial hub, elite residence, site of religious or secular authority (after Schofield 1987) – is harder to identify. Towns persist only so long as they are useful (Esmonde Cleary 1993): it is likely that some urban functions centred around vestiges of local authority persisted, but without integration into the economic system of the Roman empire many towns would have become economically obsolete. There are examples of secular Romano-British sites being reused as Anglo-Saxon Christian sites from the 5th century (Bell 1998, 2005; Blair 2005; Morris 1983). Possible explanations include local memories of Imperial authority or shared Pagan and Christian preferences for enclosed elevated spaces with access to water and wide views (Bell 1998, 2005; Blair 2005). Interestingly, Caistor shared several of these physical features and the 8th- to 9th-century *titulus* suggests it was used as a Christian site prior to the construction of the extant 11th-century church. The religious reuse of the walled settlement would have therefore had economic implications for Caistor's survival and function, as it was first integrated into the church's market economy (as minsters had the right to hold markets) and later into international trade networks through contact with Scandinavia.

### **Methodology**

Focussing on the single settlement of Caistor allowed investigation of questions of town function and the identity of its occupants at landscape, townscape and person-centred scales. A GIS-based methodology was selected as it allowed integration of archaeological grey literature from the Historic Environment Record, Archaeological Data Services and the Portable Antiquities Scheme, with geological, environmental and spatial data, and allowed the researcher to query these data at multiple scales and to incorporate a subject-focussed approach.

The landscape scale was identified as an arbitrary 10km buffer around Caistor. The townscape scale included Caistor and its immediate surrounds as far as the deserted medieval village of Fonaby to the north and Nettleton to the south. The person-centred scale attempted to investigate the data at the human scale, through incorporating a viewer height of 1.5m in all viewshed analyses, considering how the broad social changes summarised above would have played out in

a single lifetime, and extrapolating past experiences of Caistor based on the enclosure's known or estimated physical features.

Map regression analyses and archival research identified areas within the enclosure which had undergone the least disturbance (see Figure 2). Resistivity survey was considered to offer best potential for successful survey based on the characteristics of these areas (after English Heritage 2008). Topographic survey was undertaken to provide additional surface detail and record survey grid locations. Resistivity survey was conducted with a Geoscan RM15 resistivity meter (twin probe array), with an 0.5m sampling interval and the array set at 0.5m and 1.0m. 10 × 10m grids were surveyed in a 1m zig-zag traverse. Topographic survey was conducted as a free station survey using a Leica TC 407 Total Station and OS benchmarks. The survey results were downloaded and processed with the proprietary software and compared against the other data using the GIS.

Viewsheds were generated from a Digital Elevation Model (DEM) of Caistor and its 10km buffer zone in ArcGIS. The views from the enclosure, routeways and contemporaneous settlements (Bigby, North Kelsey, North Owersby, Claxby and Keelby) within the 10km buffer zone were analysed. A binary viewshed identifies the cells in the DEM visible from selected points or lines and plots them as 'visible' (1) or 'not visible' (0); viewsheds may be made more realistic or 'fuzzy' by accounting for atmospheric conditions, distance, and vegetation (Alblas 2012). As no atmospheric or vegetation data were available, the fuzzy viewsheds applied a distance decay function to simulate the decreased visibility of places further away from the viewer (after Beaulieu 2007), incorporating a viewer height of 1.5m. The fuzzy viewshed appears as a shaded gradient overlaid onto the other data in the GIS, with decreased visibility indicated by darker shading.

## Results and discussion

Querying the distribution of archaeological material from the HER and PAS relative to landscape features identified both continuity and change in land use over time. Roman Lincolnshire was a grain-growing region and the Wolds were mixed agricultural and sheep-grazing land (Faith 2012); the climatic downturn at the end of the Roman period may have reduced surpluses but would not have resulted in abandonment of the area (Green 2011). Roman material was evenly distributed over the Clay Vale (n=324) and the Lincolnshire Wolds (n=364), while material from AD410–1000 concentrated on the Wolds (n=131, compared with n=42 on the Vale). This patterning may indicate a reduction of land use in the Vale or, perhaps more likely, a reduction in artefact-rich elite 'Roman' ways of life alongside continuity of the artefact-poor lifestyle of both rural Romanised Britons and Anglo-Saxon incomers. When post-AD410 material is broken down by century, the burials of wealthy women with Anglo-Saxon dress items at Fonaby in the 6th century (Cook 1981), and the concentration of Anglo-Scandinavian dress items at Bigby in the 9th–12th centuries, may represent either incoming settlers or local people choosing to identify themselves as such. Possible

Romano-British burials alongside the Anglo-Saxon burials at Fonaby may indicate coexistence (O'Brien 1999) or continuity of use for the burial ground.

Continuity is more apparent in the pre- and post-AD410 clustering of material at settlements or divisions within the landscape. North Owersby, South Kelsey and North Kelsey lie on the border of the Kelsey Moors and Ancholme Carr zones in the Clay Vale, while Caistor, Fonaby and Bigby lie on the chalk cliff between the Lincolnshire Wolds and the Clay Vale along the route of the High Street trackway. The boundaries between landscape types can offer access to a wider range of resources (Gallaway 2005). The concentration of trade items (coins and weights) in these sites was particularly marked. It is highly likely that undiscovered archaeological material is present between these areas but the consistent grouping of Early medieval finds at particular landscape features suggests there is a relationship between landscape use and the boundaries between HLC zones. Equating the change from Roman material culture to early medieval culture with population replacement is unrealistic. Rather it is likely that the location of these towns, including Caistor, at boundaries between landscape types, made them consistently 'useful' during the 4th to 11th centuries, and enabled them to serve multiple functions over time.

Caistor's development can be broken down into five phases and appears to mirror changes at the landscape scale. In Phase 1, Caistor was a pre-Roman earthwork enclosure with a single surrounding ditch. In Phase 2, it was refortified with a stone-faced wall, bastions and a larger outer ditch. The inner ditch may have been refilled at this point and the earliest phases of the cemetery at 16 High Street may have been established. Consisting of unaccompanied burials and set just outside the enclosure wall, the cemetery was considered to be Roman until two burials were radiocarbon dated to the 8th century (Munford 2004a). In Phase 3 (AD410–600), another early Anglo-Saxon cemetery was probably established at Castle Hill while the High Street cemetery remained in use. A funerary urn found at Castle Hill was dated to AD450 (Parsons 1973). In Phase 4 (AD600–1000), the enclosure was definitely reoccupied as a *titulus* or dedication stone memorialises the construction of a new church (Field and North 1996), possibly an early Minster, in the 8th to 9th centuries (Shapland 2012), 9th- to 12th-century occupation and demolition deposits at 1 Bank Lane (which also respected the Roman street layout) (Taylor 1996) and 9th- to 10th-century rubbish pits cutting the outer ditch fill at Caistor Grammar School (Field 1992). The High Street cemetery was in use, and Caistor Market Place may have been established outside of the enclosure's east gate. 7th- to 9th-century coins are also known from Caistor (Ulmschneider 2000). Phase 5 (AD1000–1100) includes the construction of the current Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, which may incorporate elements of the earlier church (Shapland 2012) and ends with the destruction of the wall (Figure 3). The Church is constructed from Tealby Ironstone, rather than the superior limestone used in the construction of the wall; robbed enclosure stone was found in a 12th–13th century oven (Hunter 1964) and other buildings after that date (Rahtz 1960), suggesting the wall survived through the 4th to 11th centuries.

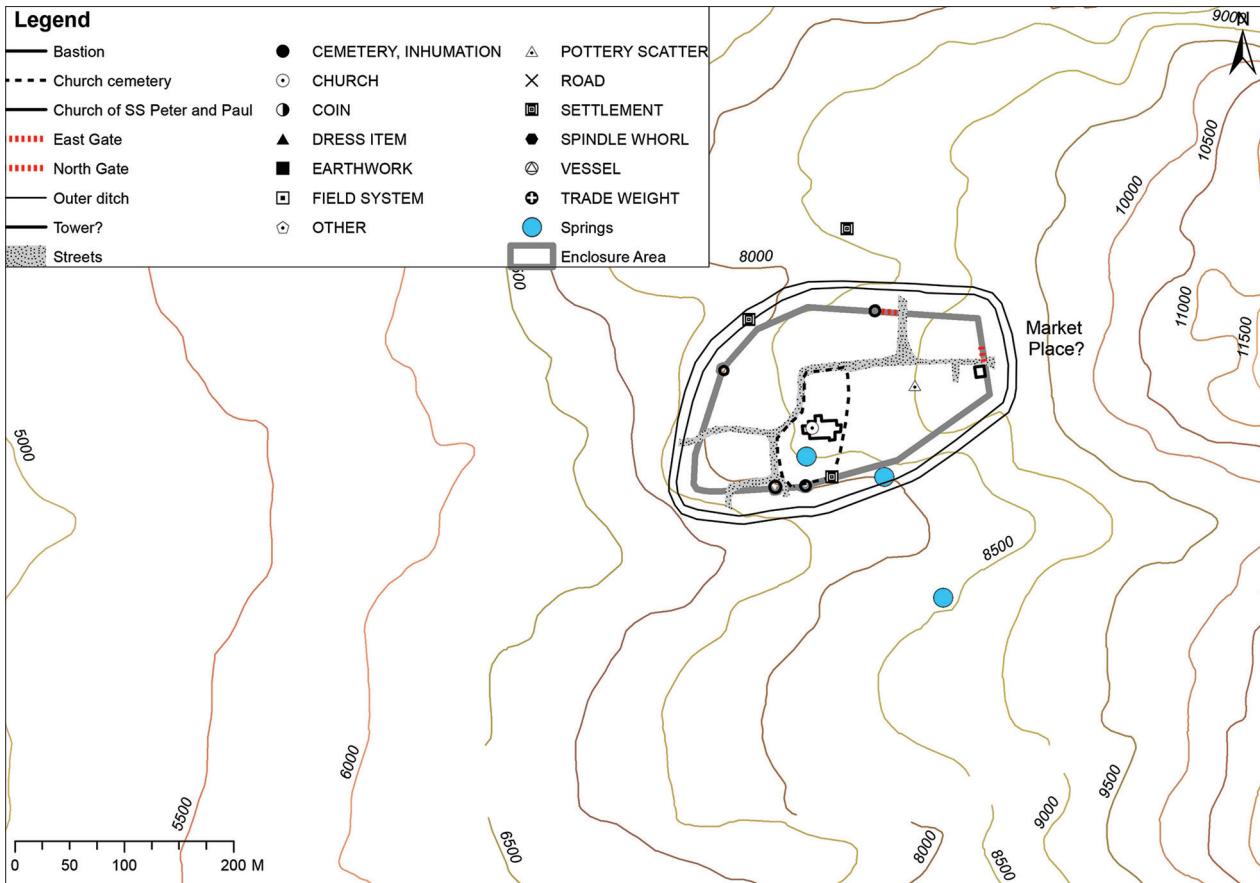


Figure 3 Phase 5 – the final phase of use for Caistor prior to the destruction or abandonment of the Roman walls in the 11th century.

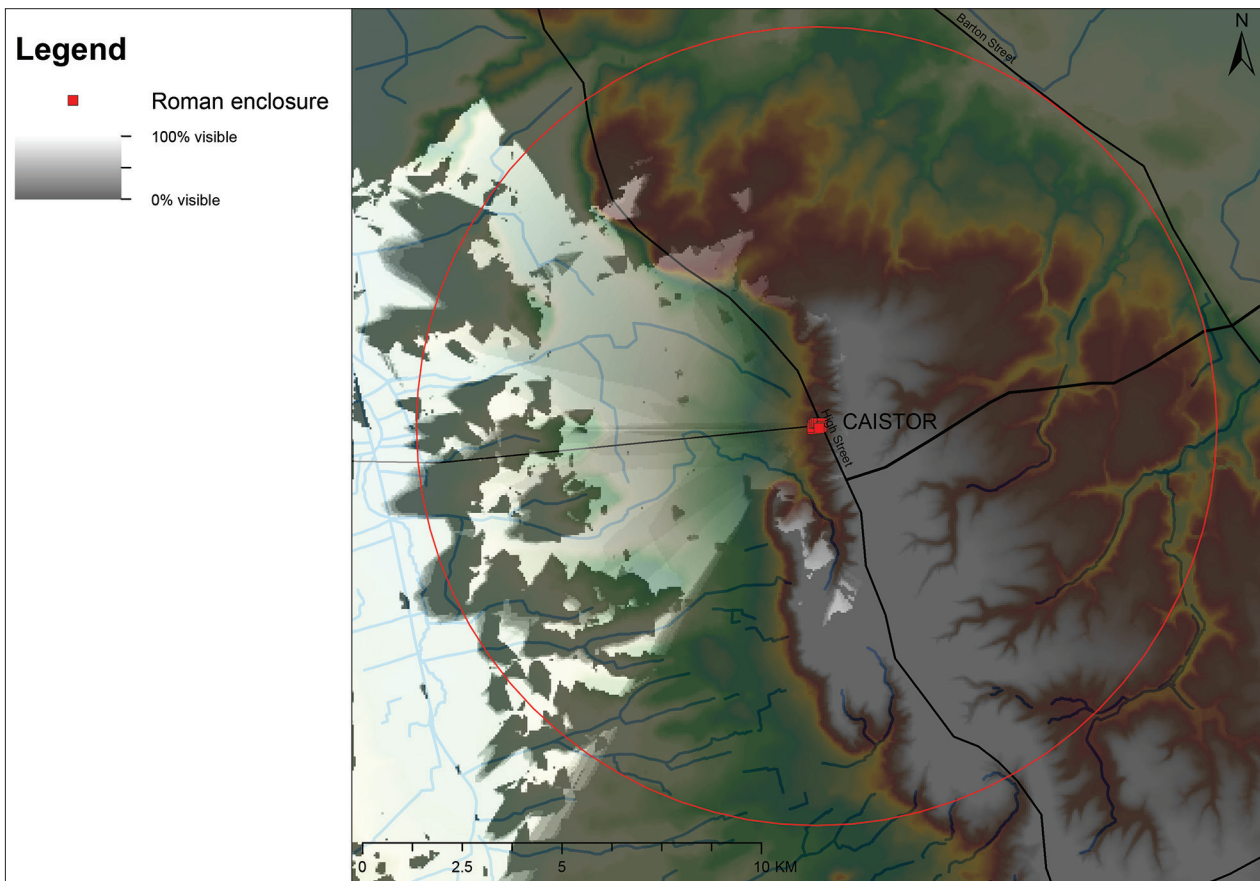


Figure 4 The fuzzy viewshed generated to show the westward focus of visibility from atop Caistor's enclosure walls.

The resistivity survey identified no anomalies analogous to buried wall segments; the wall may be completely robbed out or may be obscured by post-medieval terracing. Anomalies identified in the southern half of the enclosure were interpreted as the result of post-medieval gardening works. A 5- to 9m-wide high-resistance anomaly in the allotment area lies along the predicted route of the outer defensive ditch, between excavated sections at Caistor Grammar School and 16 High Street. This anomaly may represent a clay-filled ditch or later rubble spreads.

The generation of fuzzy viewsheds showed Caistor had best intervisibility with the west, overlooking the Clay Vale towards Ermine Street (Figure 4). When approached from the Lincolnshire Wolds to the east it is hidden by the terrain until almost the last minute. The enclosure would have been visually striking due to its size and colour, and while the views from atop its walls and bastions would have been spectacular, the height of these walls and the enclosure's elevation relative to the surrounding terrain would also have completely hidden the outside world from a person standing at ground level. This 'separateness', along with Caistor's hilltop location and perpetually upwelling springs, may have resonated with both pagan Germanic and early Christian beliefs and contributed to the site's reuse as an early Minster location (Bell 1998, 2005; Blair 2005). In addition, its location along travel routes and between different resource bases in the Wolds and the Vale would have made it a suitable location for a Minster market. The inclusion of phenomenological approaches through this subject-focused methodology did not generate new data, but helped to inform discussion of how Caistor may have been perceived by its residents and neighbours over the centuries.

## Conclusion

This reassessment of the archaeology of Caistor suggests that the physical features and location of the enclosure would have made it useful in the changing socio-political environment of Lincolnshire in the 4th to 11th centuries. Its location along natural travel routes and proximity to different resource bases made it useful as an original Roman outpost, suited it for reintegration into any local post-Roman trading networks in the 5th–6th centuries, and for reincorporation into international trading networks later on. The different associations people may have held regarding its stone walls may have played a part both in their reuse over generations and their eventual abandonment and destruction.

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