

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

## IN MARKET PLACE, BINGHAM

In April 2015 Rushcliffe Borough Council replanted several trees in Bingham Market Place. BHTA applied to them for permission to take advantage of the disturbance to the surface of the Market Place to examine the subsurface for evidence of the historical use of this space for a market. The council agreed and both they and their contractor Paul Alvey of Commercial Surface Solutions co-operated fully with BHTA.

The project consisted of one controlled dig, CB36, and the examination of sections dug through the soil in four of the pits being prepared for new trees.

Although Bingham acquired its market charter in 1314 the only documentary evidence for the location of Market Place is a reference in a manorial survey of 1586 to the old manor house, situated on the north west side of the Market Place being in a state of ruin. This old building was discovered where it should have been according to this reference.

### LOCATION AND PROTOCOL FOR THE CONTROLLED DIG

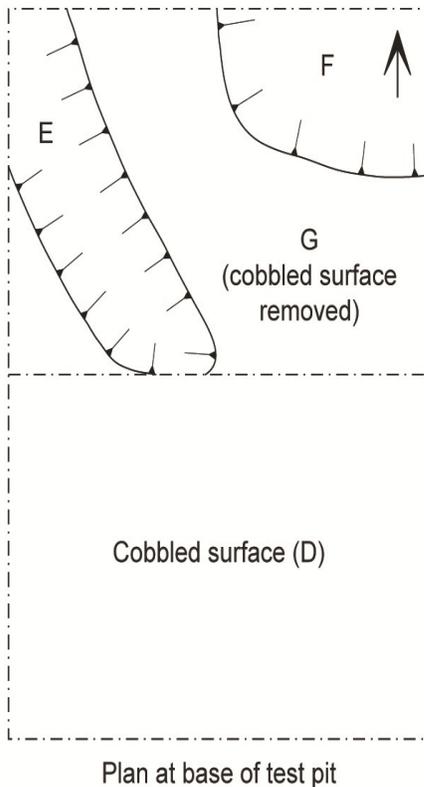
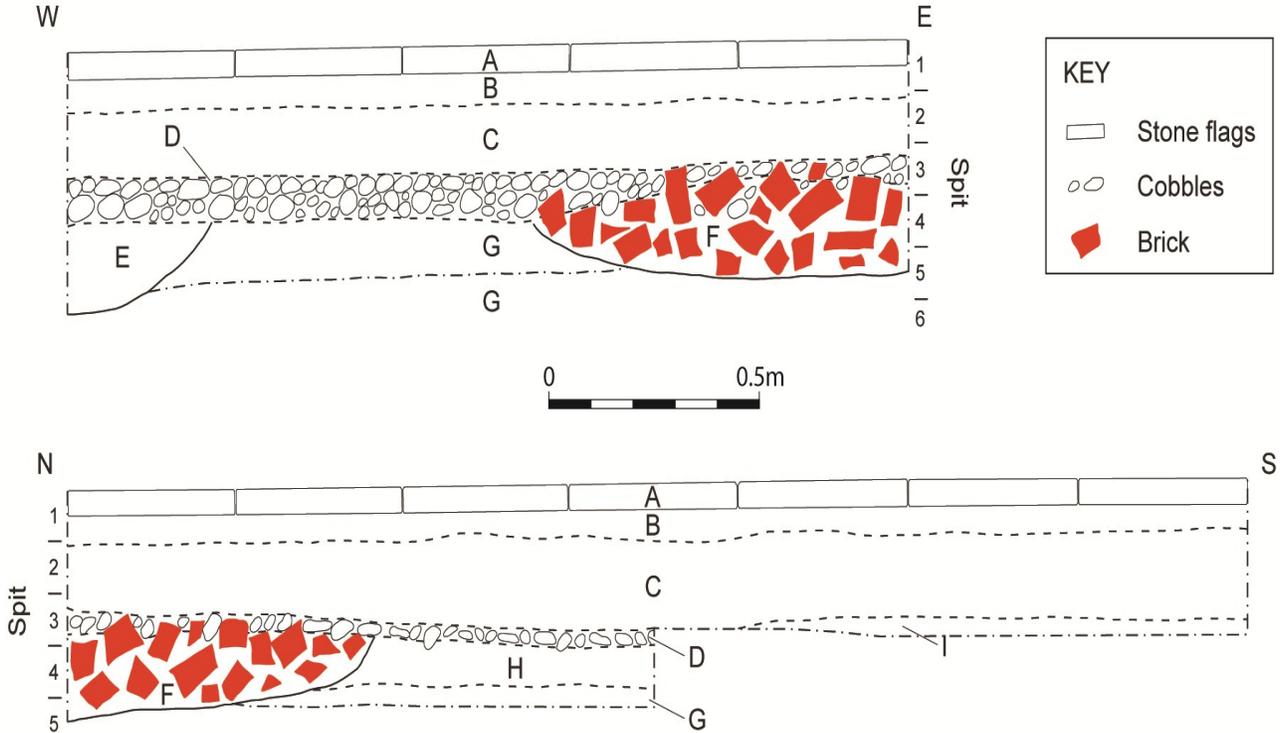
<b>Site code</b>	CB36
<b>NGR</b>	470465 339963
<b>Height OD</b>	23.469 m [error 0.026 m].
<b>Address</b>	Bingham Market Place
<b>Dig dates</b>	25 <sup>th</sup> -26 <sup>th</sup> April 2015
<b>Pit site</b>	North side of the Market Place, opposite the gateway to Beauvale House. Site of a new tree.
<b>Pit protocol</b>	N-S pit measuring 2 metres wide and 2.8 metres N-S. Sieved the top 30 cm together. Below that sieved in 10 cm spits. All depths are measured and spits counted from the top of the flagged surface. In the northern half of the pit the cobbled surface was removed and the pit taken to the basal clay.

# MARKET PLACE

## ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Fig 1. Drawings of trench sections and plan for CB36

CB36



### EXPLANATION OF CONTEXTS

Top drawing is the north wall

Middle drawing is the east wall

Bottom drawing is the plan.

- A Flags stones
- B Sharp sand
- C Hard core of angular gravel and fines
- D Layer of cobbles
- E Dark brown-black loam fill ing a trench-like depression
- F Brick-filled depression with bricks and clay loam.
- G Red-brown sandy clay
- H Hard packed sandy gravel clay.
- I Green sand

## Description of pit

The pit measured 2 x 2.8 metres and was situated close to the kerb on the north side of the Market Place. The sequence encountered consisted of:

Modern surface of flags on sand to 12cm  
Hard core to 24cm  
Cobbles surface to 30 cm  
Made ground to c 50 cm  
Clay



*Starting work on the excavation. The flags have been removed and the underlying sand layer is being taken off.*



*View to the north of the cobbled surface covering the whole pit. This surface was well packed and tree roots had not penetrated it. This meant that they spread laterally caused the tree to lift, damaging the market place surface.*

The modern Market Place surface consists of flags laid on sharp sand. The sand layer, which is less than 10 cm thick lies on hard packed hard core which had been tipped onto a cobbled surface. This amounted to raising the level of the Market Place by 24 cm.

The cobbled surface was mostly a single layer of rounded stones, closely packed. Some brick was found with the stones and in parts the thickness extended to more than one course. The cobbles are all well rounded and are mostly less than 6 cm long, but in patches there were cobbles to 15 cm. The rock types present include quartz, quartzite, volcanic rocks, some micro-veined quartz. All of these types are found in the Trent gravels.

The made ground immediately beneath the cobbles varied across the pit. In the NE corner it was builder's rubble filling in a depression in the underlying clay. Many of the hand-made bricks found here are 2¼ inch to 2 3/8th inch thick, which are characteristic of Georgian bricks. In the west it was a dark loam filling a depression thought to be a rotted tree root.

The underlying red-brown sandy clay is the glacial deposit. Its upper surface is highly irregular.

## Finds

The only finds retrieved were from the made ground beneath the cobbles. They include red-bodied coarse earthenware and Mottled Ware with some bones.



*Close up of the cobbled surface showing irregular sized stones. The larger stones tended to be present in patches.*



*The north east corner. Flags at surface, sand and hard core overlie the cobble layer with here a mixture of bricks, stones and loam filling in a depression in the underlying clay.*



*The north east corner where the rubble had been removed showing the irregular surface beneath it. It is thought that this is the site of a long-dead and rotted tree*



*The north west corner where a trench-like depression in the clay was filled with loam. It is thought that this is the course of a rotted tree root.*



*The completed pit looking south. Half of the cobbled surface was left. The trench that contained the postulated tree root is on the right. The square slot on the left was dug to test the depth of the red clay. It was not bottomed at 20 cm.*

### **Interpretation**

The cobbled surface immediately beneath the foundation layer for the modern market place was hard, flat and well packed. It appears to have been laid on a prepared surface in which patches of bricks mixed with loam were used to fill in irregularities in the underlying clay surface. The irregularities in the area of the excavation seem to have been created by a rotting tree and its root system. Once the surface had been levelled this way the cobbles were tipped on it; in places directly onto clay and in others on the made ground used to fill depressions.

The only dateable piece of pottery found was underneath the cobbled layer among the made ground and was Mottled Ware, which has a date

range from c1675 to mid/late 18<sup>th</sup> C.

An additional clue is the presence of so many Georgian bricks under the cobbles. They had to come from a demolished building somewhere nearby. One possibility is that the building was the prison that had been built to accommodate Dr Thomas Patefield the Bingham surgeon who was committed to life imprisonment in accommodation specially built for him in the Market Place in 1710. His crime was to try set fire to Bingham on three occasions. He lived in the prison until 1739 after which it was demolished. If this were the source of the rubble then it ties down the date for the laying of the cobbles to after 1739, which would fit within the date range for Mottled Ware.

The cobbled surface was not covered over until the 1960s when the present surface was laid. Interestingly, none of the many photographs we have for the Market Place prior to the 1960s show the cobbles clearly enough to be sure that that is what is being depicted. Only two of the many people we have interviewed who were here in the 1960s remember the cobbles. Most recall only mud, but the early photographs all show people standing on a clean surface.

### Other sites

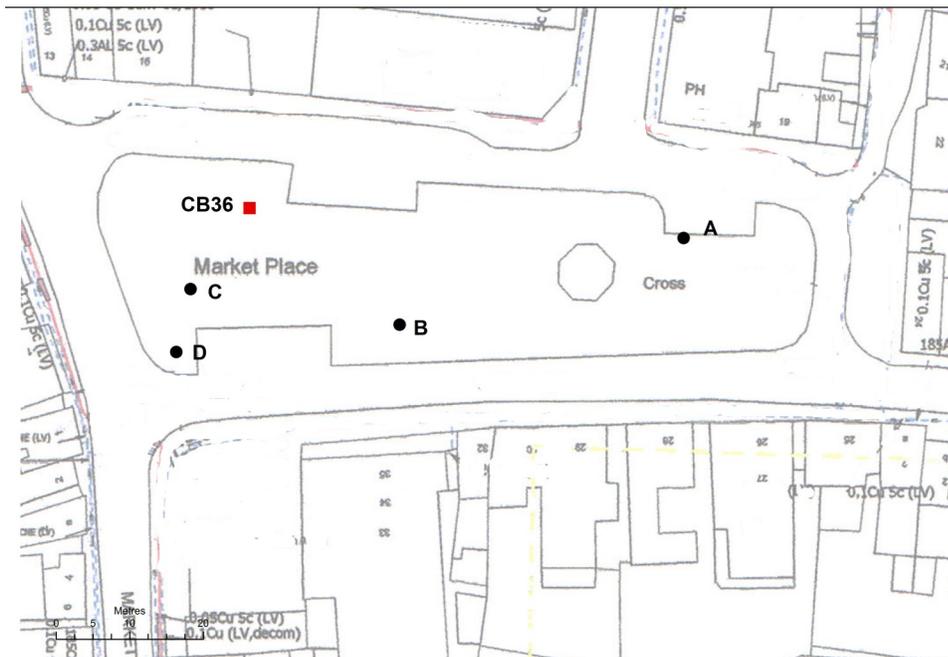
Four of the pits dug for the trees were examined before they were prepared for the new trees. These were:

- A 470524 339960 opposite the Butter Cross pub
- B 470586 339947 opposite the entrance to the Co-op
- C 470457 339952 opposite the entrance to Eaton Place
- D 470455 339943 the SW corner of Market Place

In all of these the cobbled surface was in evidence, though it was badly degraded opposite the entrance to the co-op where it had been partly covered by asphalt and in the SW corner of Market Place the cobbles were also covered by a layer of asphalt. It is assumed that this was an attempt to

*Fig 2 Map of Bingham Market Place (top to the north) showing the four tree pits examined, letters as above, and the location of the controlled dig CB36. Map by permission of Western Power.*

repair damage to the cobbled surface. Pieces of asphalt were examined, but there was nothing in them to help give it an age.



There is a deposit of made ground in places immediately beneath the cobbles where it has been used to fill in irregularities prior to laying the cobbles. It usually consists of brick, pebbles, and pottery in clay soil. The pottery is usually coarse earthenware and can be dated as later than 1675. In the pit opposite the Butter Cross pub this layer is

44 cm thick, the maximum recorded.

In all the pits the sandstone bedrock was encountered at 70-110 cm down. The rock is a medium-grained sandstone thought to be the Triassic Hollygate Member.

Red-brown glacial clay overlies the sandstone in all the pits.

In conclusion, it seems that nowhere in the present market place is there evidence of usage prior to the late 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> C.