

DISCOVERING BINGHAM

Quarterly NEWSLETTER of the **Bingham Heritage Trails Association**
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BHTA: Increasing public awareness of our heritage in Architecture, Folk & Natural History, Archaeology & Geology

A GRANT HAT TRICK FOR BHTA

In the last issue of 'Discovering Bingham' we reported that we were planning to make our third application to the Local Heritage Initiative for our next research programme running from the end of this year to October 2007. The LHI is a national grant scheme that helps local groups to investigate, explain and care for their local landscape, landmarks, traditions and culture. The Heritage Lottery Fund provides the grant but the scheme is a partnership, administered by the Countryside Agency with additional funding from Nationwide Building Society.

We have now heard that our application has been successful. The latest award of £24,651 will fund our future projects that are all concerned with the 'History of Settlement in Bingham', from the Stone Age to the present. This is a major archaeological project and will last three years. It involves an archaeological field walking survey of the parish, a survey of the deserted Medieval village at Crow Close and attempts to reconstruct and publish a book of maps of the parish in 1586 and 1776. Further data will be added to our web site and any field walking finds deposited in the Castle Museum.



An audience of seventy braved the first snows of the winter to attend the Methodist Church Hall on 18th November for the first BHTA public lecture in the current series when Adrian Henstock spoke on 'Georgian Bingham'. See the report on page 3

To qualify for the grant, the sum has to be matched by an equivalent amount of voluntary labour; this is evaluated at £50 for seven hours. Put another way, BHTA membership must provide 3400 hours of voluntary effort over the next three years. For this reason we must maintain and increase our membership and team of committed helpers.

The grant sounds like a lot of money, and so it is, **BUT** it can only be spent on the direct costs of carrying out the projects included in the formal application for the grant. It does not cover the expenses of the day to day running of the association, such as, maintenance of the web site, re-printing free information leaflets or putting on a yearly series of open public lectures. There

are other heritage projects that are outside the grant. For example, our Built Heritage and Oral History will continue. We are also considering the idea of putting on a play on a historic theme, such as happened on Plough Mondays in times gone by. To achieve this it would be necessary to recruit talent and expertise from outside the present membership. So far, in spite of the efforts of the committee and a reference to this idea in the last Newsletter, no volunteers have come forward.

Another idea is to arrange a day on which everyone with a camera in Bingham will be encouraged to take a picture of a local subject or activity to contribute to an exhibition on a day in the life of the town. The collection would then be offered to the County picture archive as a reference source

for future historians. All these ideas require funding if they are to materialise so the Association needs a steady programme of fund-raising activities. (see below) While these events cannot be funded from the LHI grant, the voluntary effort in organising and promoting them, which acknowledges LHI support for BHTA, can be counted towards the target 3400 volunteer hours.

So, as we move into 2005, there is a lot of work to be done. If you have energy and an enthusiasm for the town's heritage, ring Peter Allen (see page 4) to join and become active in a friendly group that already has two successfully completed project programmes under its belt. **You could be part of the Third!**

**B.H.T.A.
Fund-raising
Events**

**Friday
December 10th
HOT POT
SUPPER**

W.I. Hall at 7.30pm.
Tickets £10 incl. Wine

**Wednesday
March 16th
WINE TASTING
with Jack Wilson**

Infants School Hall
at 7.30pm.
Tickets £8 incl. light food

RING 831575

**THE ORAL HISTORY
ARCHIVE**

Many years from now, anyone wishing to discover what Bingham was like during the twentieth century, will only need to listen to a series of tapes, or read the transcripts, which will be kept in the Bingham and Nottingham libraries. The first tranche of 29 interviews has been completed which marks the end of our Phase 2 Project. Extracts will be included on the BHTA web site.

A small band of interviewers have captured these memories which are only the start of tapping this rich resource. Some interviewees were born in the town; some have come to live here and have contributed to the quality of life in this community; some do not live in Bingham, but work here and thereby play a substantial part in the life of the town. For example, we have interviewed a local police chief, a head teacher in a Bingham school and a manager of a local supermarket. The stories they, and others, have to tell, paint a picture of the town as it is today; as when police and archaeologists are called in to investigate the discovery of a skeleton, or what happens when a large group of people decide to hold a demonstration.

Mostly, we go about our daily lives with little thought for what others are doing, yet without each individual contribution, the fabric of the town would change. Maybe only slightly, or maybe with increasing effect over time, but this is why we are all important to the life of the town. Together, these interviews represent people



Hilda Smith presents Lesley Rollitt - Senior Library Assistant, with copies of the Oral History interview transcripts to be held in the Local History section at Bingham Library.

who live and work in the Bingham of today, and who will forever be a known part of Bingham's history, now that their stories have been recorded.

The work of adding more interviews to the archive will continue. If you feel that you have a story to tell (or know someone else who has) that would be a useful addition to this archive, please let us know. If you would like to join the interview team, be assured that volunteers are always welcome, just contact Hilda Smith (see page 4).

**'ALL THE WORLD
AND BINGHAM'**

(Old Nottinghamshire saying) Before railway and bus services, lumbering carriers' carts provided transport. A Newark inn, used as a terminus by the carriers displayed a notice board that stated, 'Passengers and parcels conveyed to all parts of the world - and to Bingham'. Hence the phrase!

IT'S ON THE WEB

Continuing our series of reviews of topics covered on the BHTA web site, the following can be found in the 'Natural Bingham' section.

Bingham's Hedges

In the Middle Ages the land around Bingham was farmed by the open field system of agriculture. The only hedges would have been around small closes used for keeping livestock. Some named closes are known from a survey carried out in 1586. The question is when did the open fields become divided up into small fields bounded by hedges? The best documentary evidence we have is the Earl of Chesterfield's Survey Book of 1776, which shows most of the fields that currently exist, but the historian John Throsby wrote in 1797 that Bingham had been enclosed for about 100 years; that is since about 1690.

A method for dating hedges was developed in the 1970s by counting the number of different species of tree and shrub in each of several 30-metre sections of a hedge. The average for these sections equates to the age of the hedge in centuries. All 250 of the hedges in the parish have been surveyed by this method. Unfortunately, many of the ages calculated do not match the documentary evidence, which may suggest that some of the hedges have been modified since they were planted. The survey revealed two major groups: mainly hawthorn hedges and mixed hedges with no dominant species. Most of the hawthorn hedges are in the arable farmland that would have been open



Several varieties of tree, including ash, field maple, elm, oak and crab apple (see insert) have been found laid and trimmed as hedges.

fields in the Middle Ages and were probably planted around 1690. The mixed hedges are mostly along and west of Chapel Lane and east of Derry Lane. They have species averages of 4 to 6 and probably are Elizabethan or older.

In the old, mixed hedges there is field maple, crab apple, hazel, purging buckthorn, ash, wild privet, dogwood and spindle, as well as more common species. The 1690 hedges consist mostly of common and Midland hawthorn and hybrids of the two, usually with blackthorn, rose and elder. Ash, grown as trees or laid in the hedge, is common, wych elm and small-leaved elm less so. The recently planted hedges along the new roads are mainly hawthorn, which along the A52 is a variety imported from Holland, but there is an imaginatively mixed hedge along the north side of the A52 with four varieties of plum, guelder rose, wayfaring tree, spindle, dogwood and hazel alongside the more common species. A database of all these hedges can be accessed on the BHTA web site.

GEORGIAN BINGHAM

BHTA began its third annual series of lectures with a presentation by Adrian Henstock about Georgian Bingham. Mr Henstock was Principal Archivist for Nottinghamshire County Council and has a special interest in the Georgian period.

Bingham was overshadowed by its close neighbours Newark and Nottingham, and never grew into a major centre. It thus has no impressive public buildings, but there are one or two pleasant Georgian houses. The Earls of Chesterfield, who were absentee landlords, owned 80% of the parish so there was also no local aristocracy to lead society, as there would have been elsewhere. Until the development of the turnpikes the main roads did not even come through the village. The road to Grantham had been along The Banks. A new road was constructed to attract traffic into the village, the reverse of modern practice!

The late 18th century was the period of 'canal mania' that

saw the opening of the Grantham Canal. 'But had the canal ever come to Bingham?' Contemporary directories said that it did and Adrian showed a map of the proposed canal with a branch to Bingham. But there are no physical remains and no other documentary evidence, so Adrian suggested that it was unlikely that the proposed branch was built.

Bingham *society* was effectively the middle class – clergy, medical men, and successful traders tended to be the leading characters of the day. In 1793, 20 farmers lived in the town, many of them on Husbandman's Street, now Long Acre, whereas only 4 'gentry' are named along with one member of the clergy and three medical people. There were several butchers, grocers, smiths, innkeepers, coopers and drapery tradesmen. One entry in the directory was for Thomas Wood, hosier and tombstone carver. Adrian showed examples of his intricate



Adrian Henstock illustrating framework knitting during his lecture.

carving depicting idyllic village scenes.

The rector and a group of important residents led by George Baxter engaged in a feud lasting 38 years, going to court several times over what were quite trivial matters. It began when the rector tried to re-institute the collection of tithes in kind rather than in cash. There were stories of adulterated milk delivered to

him each day, bells being rung in the middle of the night and drunken orgies in the churchyard, residents summonsed for playing quoits in the Market Place and allegations that the rector was drunk in church and did not fulfil his duties properly. Our audience, including the present day Rector, were highly amused by these anecdotes. The same group of respected residents also put on several plays for the amusement of the inhabitants, in aid of the poor of the parish, at a theatre along Church Street. George Baxter's gravestone carried a quotation from Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*, 'A Man he was to all the country dear', a fitting epitaph to a well respected and community spirited man.

The audience agreed with the Chairman's concluding remarks that Adrian had made Georgian Bingham come alive in both an erudite and thoroughly entertaining lecture.

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DON'T MISS

our next two public lectures in the current 2005 series.

All welcome at the Methodist Church Hall for a 7.30pm. start.

February 24th
1870's

BINGHAM SCHOOLS

Speakers:
Joyce Allen & Jack Wilson

April 28th
BROKEN POTS

Roman finds at
Carnarvon School
Speaker: Ruth Leary