

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

ASK BHTA!

We frequently receive emails through the web site from people all over the world and from Bingham seeking information, usually about family history but also about the history of a particular building. For instance we have recently answered a query from a lady tracing an ancestor who was a female servant to a butcher's family in Market Street. She was asking whether Hopkinson's butchers had been Tomkinsons - the family which employed her ancestor in 1861. By accessing the 1841 census and the tithe data base, which we now have courtesy of Notts Archives, we were able to tell her the house was in fact next to the Yeung Sing, formerly Shapers.

A more substantial enquiry came from the new owners who have recently moved into Banks House. They knew from their deeds that the house passed from the Crown to Whitenights limited, formerly of the old Rectory, Holme Pierpont, in 1958. The property stretched from The Banks to Long Acre, and the northern portion was sold to Notts CC for the fire station. Banks House deeds only start from 1958 because until then it was part of the Shelford Estate owned by the Earls of Chesterfield and later Carnarvon. So dating is not possible using documentary evidence!



Christmas Greetings

The Market Place has been at the heart of the town since Medieval times and today it is the site for many community activities like the annual Christmas Fair. BHTA looks forward to seeing you all at our stand at this year's event on 7th December

But we can easily interrogate our census data base! In 1841 Banks House was occupied by a substantial farming family named Foster, headed by 35 year old John Foster. In 1851 he was farming 300 acres; by 1861 this had grown to 500 acres. In 1881 and 1891 the farm was occupied by the family Brett, who were listed as being there in the 1896 trade directory. We could not find any reference to the farm or the Bretts in the 1901 census - but it may be the access was from Long Acre, but the house was not mentioned by name. Houses were not necessarily listed in order and addresses were not used, so the occupier could have been one of several named farmers. The Fosters

were buried in the churchyard, including a daughter who married one of the town's doctors, Dr Eaton who lived at what is now 2 Long Acre. We think a Foster brother occupied Porchester Farmhouse at one point. Fosters Lane probably gets its name from the family.

The 1841 Tithe map shows the house and farm buildings largely as they are now. The 1835 map shows a much less substantial building on a different part of the plot, suggesting that perhaps the present house and outbuildings were built around 1835-1840. We are in the process of reconstructing a map of Bingham for 1776, but we are not there yet!. The

information we have so far for 1776 suggests that a Widow Foster was in occupation then, so there would have been a house of some sort there but probably not the current substantial property.

The current external brickwork is strongly suggestive of the early Victorian period. The south façade has a large bay which seems to have been a (slightly) later addition. It may have replaced the original main entrance, which would have been more in keeping with a symmetrical Georgian design. Commonly the prosperous farms were rebuilt in the mid 1800s, or more usually re-fronted and extended, as with Porchester Farm, Beauvale and others. The owners say the cellar seems to be constructed of bricks of similar age, so there is not really any evidence of the house being much earlier than 1830-40. He has been told there is a brick dated 1830 in the old barn, which would be consistent with the evidence so far. The lower courses of the boundary wall are composed of bricks of around 1700. The design of this wall is repeated throughout Bingham and was probably the standard for the estate.

If you have a query about Bingham, do ask BHTA, you never know, we may be able to help!

STAGE STRUCK

Local history themes used for Concert programme

BHTA investigates all aspects of our town's heritage and aims to disseminate the information as widely as possible. We regularly update our web site and prints of our findings are held in the reference sections of the County and local library, we publish this newsletter and free leaflets and hold our winter series of public lectures. We are always trying to think of other ways of bringing our discoveries to the public, particularly Bingham residents. One way of doing this, which has so far not got off the ground, is for BHTA to work with local groups to use selected anecdotes from our past to form the basis of dramatised presentations as plays or maybe even pageants. Up to now our approaches to individuals and groups that we hoped would be interested and with the appropriate skills and talents have not been successful until we put the idea to the Bingham Community Arts Committee. Many readers will be familiar with the regular chamber music concerts that they have presented for the past ten years. Recently they have departed from their usual programme format of music with some linking theme performed by talented local musicians with an 'Evening with Thomas Hardy' giving readings from his letters and novels interspersed with music from his period. This was an addition to the biennial Christmas-themed events, combining music, prose and poetry that are now in their eighth year. The latest in this 'occasional series' will be

performed at the Robert Miles Infant School at 7.30 on the evening of Sunday 16th December.

BHTA offered a selection of material to BCAC. From this their artistic director Steven Halls has devised '**Bingham, Christmas, 1865**' The scene is set in the Chesterfield Arms on Christmas Eve, 1865 where Sir Henry Winter and his party, due to the breakdown of their carriage, have been marooned in the town for the festive season. This story line, as far as we know, is entirely fictitious but it gives an excuse to introduce genuine local press reports from our research in the county archives. The same archive provided us with a playbill dated June 1784. This announced that, '*For the benefit of the poor of Bingham, at the Theatre in BINGHAM, a select Company of Gentlemen of that Town will present*' listing two plays, '*with singing etc. between the ACTS*'. The initiative in producing plays for charitable causes such as school and poor was so unusual as to be remarkable for the period, especially without the patronage of the gentry. Other records show the plays included four comedies and two tragedies that obviously required some expertise of the performers, who included six farmers, a plumber, a mason and a framework-knitter. This taste for drama was not just a solitary occurrence; Samuel Parson's company was licensed at the County Quarter Sessions to perform at Bingham in 1793, which must have been one of the smallest places on their tour.

But, where was the theatre? This sparked off some further

BINGHAM,

CHRISTMAS, 1865

7.30pm. Robert Miles
Infant School
December 16th

£7.00 Including refreshments
(accompanied children free)
Bingham Library 01949 837905
& Classical CD 0115 9483832

built heritage research and on 16th December we will be displaying some of the results for our audience to examine. Our conclusion is that the building was just across Church Street from the Chesterfield Arms. As we knew the names of the plays and their authors, that were performed in 1784, more browsing on the Web came up with the scripts and one of these, **'The Mock Doctor or The Dumb Lady Cured'** has been ingeniously woven into Steven Halls' programme. He introduces Mr. William Chettle, a corn merchant who lived in Bingham in 1865 and, according to Steven, happens to be preparing a revival of the 1784 performances* and with a bundle of rehearsal scripts just happens to be in the lounge of the Chesterfield when Sir Henry and his party arrive. What could be more natural than he should suggest that they might care to pass the time with a play reading?! Also, true to the 1784 programme, the performance on the 16th will include music of the 1800s with Mr Neville Ward at the pianoforte and songs rendered by baritone, Mr Jeremy Leaman.

**(As an aside, the playbill lists a forebear of William Chettle, possibly his grandfather Charles, as a member of the 1784 cast.)*

We are sure we can offer our audience an entertaining and informative evening. Details of tickets and where to get them are shown in the panel at the bottom of page 2. BHTA is grateful to BCAC, and particularly Steven Halls with his creative talents, for making it possible to present some of our work in this rather different way.

HOT POT SUPPER FIELD WALKING SONG



At our annual Hot Pot Supper we were entertained by our Secretary, Jack Wilson's rendering of his song 'At BHTA in Bingham, Notts', as shown below, sung to the 'Much Binding in the Marsh' tune.

At BHTA in Bingham, Notts,
We started an ambitious field-walking project. At BHTA etc;
It got much bigger than most of us expected,
We've got lines to mark the transects and the stints - and yes there's more,
We've little flags to pin point what we find upon the floor,
In fact we've got so much equipment we can't shut Geoff Ashton's garage door
At BHTA etc,

At BHTA etc., We're walking all the fields within the parish border. At BHTA etc.,
That's 900 hectares or something of that order.
We've picked and washed and bagged 40,000 finds or more,
We've bent and straightened up again until our backs are blooming sore,
We've filled so many boxes the Ashtons have been eating off the floor,
At BHTA. etc.

At BHTA etc., We're so glad to have Peter as our leader, At BHTA etc,
And Joyce is there whenever we need her,
There's Geoffrey and there's Roger, Adrian and Robin too,
And then there's our dear Hilda who gave life to this whole crew,
And then there's John and me, of course, oh and not forgetting Sue,
At BHTA etc.

At BHTA etc., Now not all the praise belongs to the Committee, At BHTA etc.,
But I can't mention everyone; its such a pity,
But its thanks to ALL the Members, it's a feather in their cap,
The work they've done has certainly put Bingham on the map,
So Walkers, Washers, Baggers, give yourselves a damn good clap,
At BHTA etc.

At BHTA etc; I'm coming to the end of my story, At BHTA etc,
There is no doubt we've covered ourselves in glory;
We've found an ancient axe head, a flint arrowhead or two,
Lots of lovely clay pipe bowls and pots people threw into the loo,
But if anyone wants some hardcore we're going to have a ton or two,
At BHTA in Bingham, Notts, get out the rota,
At BHTA in Bingham, Notts, pick up the equipment;
At BHTA in Bingham, Notts, what's the field number?
At B. -H. -T -A - in - BINGHAM - Notts

THE LAST STINT !

After 74 weeks and a couple of days of fieldwork, over 10,000 hours of effort by nearly 100 volunteers spread over four winters, field walking is finished! The last stint has been walked – a stint is a five-metre length of a transect; in the field, all finds picked up in one stint go in one bag.

There is an air of relief about this. When we began we had no idea it was going to take such an effort, but having done it we can feel proud of our achievement. We don't think there are many parishes anywhere in the country where nearly 900 hectares have been field walked. The odds were sometimes set against us. The crop rotation used by the Bingham farmers was not always in our favour and warm autumns weren't much help either. Two years ago we had to abandon work on one farm because the wheat was too thick for us to see the soil through it. Fortunately, the weather was not quite as warm this year and conditions remained good right up to the end.

But our 'stint' isn't over yet; with field walking done we now have to sort the finds into categories, wash and bag them, record them in the database, number them and give grid references to them all. This will take some weeks of intense effort. They then have to go to the specialists for identification and only after that can we get down to the business of trying to work out what all the

information we have gleaned actually means.

We have started to look for air photographs of the parish to see if there are any crop marks that might tell us a story. Crop marks indicate buried walls, ditches, sites of houses, field boundaries and usually become visible in June and July if the summer is dry. So far we have found photographs showing two Romano-British farms and one of part of a Romano-British field system. One of the farms is marked by a double ditched enclosure and we found about 60 Roman pot sherds near it. At the other site there is a hut circle in the middle of the enclosure, an arrangement that was commonplace during the Iron Age. The search for photographs will continue because we have, scattered about the parish, a number of small concentrations of Roman pottery, which might mark the sites of small farms. It is already pretty obvious from this that there were a lot of people living in the countryside around here during the Roman occupation.

NEW CHURCH CLOCK

The press reported on a Bingham vestry meeting held on 30th September 1864, '*...for the purpose of...raising funds for the purchase and fixing of a new church clock...Several clock builders had..sent estimates varying from £90 to £140... the tender of Mr. Cope [of Nottingham] was accepted. A committee...was selected to... raise the necessary funds by voluntary contributions... the present clock is very old... its*

dial, also in a state of decay, has long been incapable of indicating the time. It never [had] more than one hand... and its vagaries have been the subject of uncomplimentary remarks. We anticipate that parishioners will contribute liberally...' In the event the new clock, still working in the tower today, is dated 1871. We have not found other press reports that explain this seven years delay. We hear that the church is now considering re-gilding the present clock faces. We hope '*parishioners will contribute liberally!*'



The clock face today and below, the 1871 clock mechanism in the tower. Photo: Smith of Derby Ltd.



ANYONE INTERESTED?

Gwladys Monteil is currently re-assessing the Roman samian pottery collection accumulated by Felix Oswald (much of it from Margidunum) stored in the Nottingham University Museum. Her team is taking rubbings of all the decorated pieces and will then mount and scan them. All the results will end up in a database and ultimately on the Museum Website. More volunteers would be welcome to be shown how to take rubbings and scans. A group of volunteers is meeting every Wednesday afternoon in the Museum from 1.30 to 4pm. If anybody is interested in joining the team, please email: Gwladys.Monteil@nottingham.ac.uk.

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