

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

ANNUAL HOT POT SUPPER IS A RESOUNDING SUCCESS



A hearty vote of thanks to the eight table hosts who served up such culinary delights to their 'paying guests' and to the friends who contributed a succulent variety of desserts, shown bottom right. Apart from a few of the well decorated, groaning dining tables the above pictures show John Perry serving with panache, Jack and Robin providing the cabaret(!) and top-right, Peter Hammond who rounded off the evening with a light-hearted archeological quiz. The evening raised over £400 toward BHTA running costs. Our thanks to all who attended for their support.

GARDEN FINDS

As readers will know we have field-walked the whole of 'arable' Bingham, which has revealed and is still revealing a fascinating story of the history of settlement here. Clearly we could not field walk the built up areas but with your help we can do the next best thing! Please, while you are digging your garden or allotment, keep any bits of pottery, day pipes, glass or sharp flints you may come across - we know of some people who already are doing this. Towards the middle of the summer we intend to

organise a project to collect finds from as many gardens as we can and shall be inviting you to let us have those you have to add to our interpretation of Bingham's past. We have had a civil war canon ball from a garden in Langar Road, so you never know what you might find. Most of Bingham's housing, outside the centre, dates from the 1950s and was previously farm land; some older properties were self sufficient closes, so the pickings could be extensive over the whole community. Work we have done so far gives us a

particular interest in the early medieval history of Bingham. Pottery from this period is not very striking to look at, so please keep even the stuff that looks dull and boring.

BRADSHAW'S BOTTLES

Bradshaw's Cottages, once a pair but now a single dwelling, is in the yard leading to the old Temperance Chapel off Long Acre. The walls are clearly of Victorian brick and apart from being a pretty building it seems quite unexceptional. Luke Cooper and his partners are currently renovating the



cottage; the works have revealed an interesting story...

The deeds go back to 1895 and demonstrate that, quite probably, this was Bingham's first barn conversion! The building started life as a barn for Tealby House, which was itself a freehold site, the ownership of which we have now traced back to 1586 during our project to produce a map of Bingham for that date. Tealby House and Falcon House are from the 1790's, the same date as the Wheatsheaf. During Luke's redevelopment work the interior walls have been shown to be of narrow brick, air vent holes usually found in barn walls have been revealed and close inspection of the southern gable-end shows an outline of the original single storey narrow brick wall with the later 'modern' brickwork added when the roof was raised. The original floor was below ground level, common in very old houses (e.g. the Halifax office in Market Street). The northern, originally single storeyed, part of the building had a floor a metre below ground level, provoking the thought that it may have been a dairy - this would keep the room cool.

When Luke removed the, by now, rotting floorboards in the old kitchen he made a remarkable discovery - a

hoard of perfectly preserved bottles, some showing signs of having been immersed in water for a considerable time! Peter Hammond, a local expert who has dated the glassware finds from our field walking exercise, has kindly dated the bottles for us. Most (pictured above) are from the 1890s but two [a & b] are from before 1870 and have a characteristic deep 'kick up' base designed to prevent the bottle scratching a surface. There is a complete 'Codd' bottle [c] with its glass marble stopper trapped in the neck. It contained mineral water produced by Samuel Parr of Nottingham. Two bottles [d & e] carry the name of a Newark Brewery that closed in 1889 and one [f] was from a wine merchant in Nottingham. There was also a 'square' moulded gin bottle [g] possibly from Holland. It was not just an old secret drinker's hoard as there was also [h] a 'Sanitas' disinfectant bottle, [j] a large jam jar and [i] a small medicine bottle! Luke also found a complete tall narrow stoneware bottle which we have discovered contained sparkling mineral water imported from Germany - is nothing new?

All of these, along with examples of our glass finds from field walking will be on display at our Christmas Fair

stall on December 5th in the Market Place. So be warned, if you live in an old house, watch out for what might be under your floor boards!

IT'S JUST A LOAD OF CRAP! - the disposal of night soil.

Neolithic man walked away from his rubbish and body waste when they became too overpowering and set up home a bit further away.

In Norman times people dumped their refuse into the streets and animals and geese fouled the streets. Following the Black Death in 1348, cesspits were built in cities and towns and residents were expected to use them for all waste and rubbish. These were cleared out by "gongfermors" and the waste was either spread on the land or dumped into rivers. One such gongfermor, known as Richard the Raker met with a dreadful death when he fell into a cesspit and drowned "*monstrously in the excrement*". In the country folk were advised to go and relieve themselves in their gardens or the fields "*a bow shot away from their home*". In 1388 the first Sanitary Act was passed which required "*the townfolk themselves to remove from the streets all dirt and filth*". Needless to say this practice was not adhered to - people just dumped the contents of their chamber pots and their rubbish at night instead. In the 13th and 14th centuries large institutions had their own privies and cesspits. In 1281 the cesspit at Newgate Jail in London was emptied by 13 men taking 5 nights. In the 1400s public privies were built in large towns and cities. Sir Richard (Dick) Whittington left money

in his will to build one in London with 64 seats!

Using a privy over a cesspit was a dangerous pastime. A record in Robert Fabyan's *Chronicles* (1516) tells us that *"In this year that happe of the Jew of Tewkesbury which fell into a gong upon the Saturday, and would not for reverence of his Sabot day be plucked out, whereof hearing, the Earle of Gloucester that the Jew did so grete his Sabot day thought he would do as much unto his holyday which was Sunday and so kept him there till Monday at which season he was foundyn dead"*.

Prior to the development of closets, chamber pots were used within the house. They were kept in a sideboard or cupboard in the living room for day time use. The pots were emptied into a cesspit near the house and when this was full the contents were spread onto gardens and fields. These cesspits were also used for household rubbish. The earliest form of toilet in Bingham was a privy over a cesspit outdoors. Early forms of enhancement were a shelter and a seat. By the 18thC in middle class houses the toilet had moved indoors and emptied into a cesspit in a cellar. Both indoor and outdoor cesspits in Bingham were emptied by a night soil collectors (so called because they worked at night) and spread on the surrounding fields. As well as bodily waste general household rubbish was also dumped in the pits and found its way onto the fields and gardens only to be picked up by enthusiastic field walkers over the last three years. Broken pottery and, especially clay pipe fragments deposited in middens and cesspits are particularly

helpful in dating the treatment of the fields. (You can just imagine the men of Bingham sloping off for a quiet smoke in the privy!)

During the 19th century, residents in Bingham started to convert their outdoor privies to ashpit toilets and internal lavatories to empty into an external cesspit. During the 20th century the internal lavatories were converted to empty into the town sewers once they were installed in the 1930s. There is still at least one example of a toilet emptying into a cesspit in Bingham. The 1848 Public Health Act decreed that all new houses should have either a water closet or ashpit privy. Further Victorian Acts decreed that sewers be installed and sewage works established by Local Authorities and granted them permission to sell the treated sewage to farmers. The nearest sewage farm to Bingham is at Aslockton. The



The night-soil man in 1944 collecting in Farndon.

night soil collectors who emptied the privies continued to collect and sell to the farmers or gardeners in Nottinghamshire until at least the early 1960s when the task was taken over by tanker collection and the contents taken to the sewage works. The last record of an earth

closet that we currently have in Bingham is 1947 at Bradshaw Cottages. If you have an earth closet, or a toilet draining into a cesspit, or even an old brick outhouse that could have housed a privy we would be interested to hear about it.

A NEW FIELD

You all know the problem of looking for a place on a map and finding that it is on the junction of four adjoining sheets. Our field-walking project is throwing up a similar sort of problem. Many of the areas of real interest lie at the edges of the parish. This is providing a stimulus for us to extend our range to activity outside the parish. It was not our original intention to do this, but it is clear that the answers to many of the questions about the history of settlement of Bingham lie just outside our parish boundary.

One particular question arose when we had looked at the field on the west side of the junction of Granby Lane and the A52. It contained a lot of Iron Age as well as Roman pottery, among which were bits of Samian ware, not normally found in "low status" homes. Just to the north east of this field Trent & Peak Archaeology did an excavation under what is now the car park to the extension of the prison at Whatton and found evidence of Iron Age fields. Some of you may remember the talk on this given by two of the TPA staff. It seemed that the field on the east of the Granby Lane junction might be where the Iron Age settlement was. It also seemed possible that this same settlement became Romanised and should yield a

lot of Roman pottery as well as earlier material.

The BHTA committee decided that we should have a look. We approached the Cranmer Society and they were agreeable to us working on their patch and the farmer, Chris Lamin, was also happy. Field walking started on 3rd Nov, the Monday after the long spell of good weather ended. This is the first time we have followed a hunch which can carry a risk. Examples of Iron Age finds were put with the field-walking kit so that the field walkers could familiarise themselves with what to look for. It seems to have worked. Our first week produced quite a few finds that could be Iron Age or Anglo-Saxon exactly where they were expected. It is very difficult to tell these apart and the experts will have to see them. There has, however, not been much Roman pottery. As for the flints, this is turning out to be one of the best of fields with Neolithic tools and possibly even Bronze Age. As for the younger material there is a lot of good medieval pottery, but not much else. This field is not strewn with residue of 19th century night soil, nor much 17th or 18th century pottery. We will take the work to the stage of numbering the finds, but will not process them further until the big project is completed. It is then likely to be the first of a series of small follow-up projects, for which we are going to have to raise funds. Watch this space.

CHRIS GREEN 1945 - 2008



It was with great sorrow that we learned of the death, on 30th October, of Chris Green, a Member and field walker. He had recently had an operation for cancer and though he seemed to be making a good recovery, post-operation problems proved fatal.

Chris was a keen field walker. He liked doing it. Everything about it from being out in the open air regardless of weather and finding something that may not have been touched by human hands for thousands of years appealed to him. For a very tall man he could see what was on the ground extremely well and he found some very good pieces in the two seasons he field walked. He was also coordinating the research on Crow Close, where his experience as a geophysicist in BGS proved useful. We shall all miss him and our deepest sympathy goes out to Barbara and the family.

2009 LECTURES

29th. January

Adrian Henstock

Little Brown Jugs

The story of Nottingham and Derbyshire Salt-Glazed Stoneware, 1690 - 1890.

26th. March

Beryl Cobbing and

Pam Priestland

Riots and Feuds

The aggressive lifestyle of Sir Thomas Stanhope of Shelford and his acquisition of Bingham in 1590.

4th. May

Speaker and topic TBA

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

DON'T FORGET YOUR 2009 BHTA CALENDAR

The theme this year is a celebration of 100 years in photographs of Bingham Market Place.

On sale at the newsagents in Eaton Place or direct from Geoff Ashton.

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