

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

GRANT AWARDED FOR NEW PROJECT - ROOTS AND DEVELOPMENT OF BINGHAM

Bingham Heritage Trails Association has been successful in obtaining a grant of £31,900 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to carry out a three-year project *The Roots and Development of Bingham*. In our previous project we field walked all the arable land in the parish, but looked at only map data for the built-up area. That project raised a number of interesting questions, which we will seek to address with this new project. The main questions are whether there are any indications of an Anglo-Saxon core settlement anywhere in Bingham and how this core settlement developed through time. To gain answers to these we intend to dig 30-50 archaeological test pits in central Bingham and do a study of the old houses here, including using dendrochronology to date the buildings. Many people have already volunteered to let us dig in their gardens and study their houses. In the next few weeks we will contact all these people again and plan a course of action with them and the archaeologists of Trent & Peak Archaeology, who will be working with us.

BINGHAM HERITAGE TRAIL – AT LAST!

Despite calling ourselves 'Bingham Heritage TRAILS Association', we have only produced, during our 12 year history, a couple of 'proper' trails in our Churchyard Trail and the Heritage Walks in the countryside leaflets! We have now produced a leaflet (shown below) describing a trail around the town to replace our original "Built Heritage" leaflet which is now out of date and out of print. This publication is the third component of a combined project to reconstruct the Roman Well in the cemetery and to sign the cemetery as an arboretum. The trail links the town and the cemetery to provide a heritage-packed walk around the town and the arboretum. The project was completed with the handover of the well and information board to the Mayor of Bingham on the 12th November.

The trail takes you on a circular walk from the

Buttercross to the Arboretum and back and describes the history of the town through its buildings and stories. The walk could take you an hour or more, but the key buildings are highlighted for those who don't have time for the full Monty! One of our objectives is to encourage people to spend some quiet time in the arboretum admiring the trees and enjoying the peaceful atmosphere, as the Victorian designers intended. In the sunshine of a pleasant day it really is a special place. The leaflet is available free of charge from the Bingham Library, the Town office at the Old Court House or from 19 Church Street. It will be available on the BHTA stall at the Christmas and Summer Fairs. We hope to find other outlets during the next few months. The leaflet has been designed for us for free by OVV Design of Fairfield Street.

We plan to produce a younger persons trail leaflet for those wanting to take children around the town. This will be available in the Spring.



THE STORY OF OUR ROMAN WELL

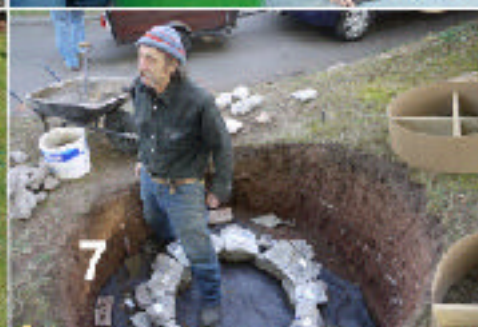
It was in the September issue of the newsletter in 2009 that we first told our readers of the Roman well discovered during the roadworks on the A46. Since then we have reported on the progress, or the lack of it, in subsequent issues. Now, two years after it started we can give a Photostory of the project.

1) Earlier in 2009 Cotswold-Wessex Archaeology started an investigation into the only area within the Bingham parish to be involved in the dualling of the A46. It turned out to be very rich in finds covering the Iron age and the Roman period including two stone-lined wells.

2) The archaeologists partially dismantled a section of one well (at arrow on photo 1) to confirm that it was of Roman origin and it was in this state that Dag Footitt discovered it during a cycle ride and passed on the information the BHTA. We in turn contacted Balfour Beatty asking if we could relocate this relic of the town's Roman heritage.

3) By December 2009 Balfour Beatty had generously agreed to employ Cotswold-Wessex Archaeology to systematically dismantle the well with three BHTA committee members (after attending H&S training) to observe and photograph the operation. Before each course of the stone lining was removed the archaeologists made detailed annotated sketches of every stone.

4) This late in the year the site was extremely wet and muddy so that removing the water from the excavation was a constant problem. As a result the 'observers' formed bucket



chains as well as photographing every stage of the dismantling, labelling and bagging all the stones which by the end of the week were safely stored in Geoff Ashton's garage.

The next photograph in the sequence was taken in September 2011. The intervening 22 months were occupied by discussing possible sites for the relocation, which ended up as the cemetery, and applying for planning permission to reconstruct the well. This was finally achieved in September.

5) The stones had to be cleaned and re-labelled and apart from our members this was carried out by a team of volunteers from the Toot Hill School 6th formers. Some of them are shown in the photo taken by the Bingham Advertiser.

6) Using an 80cm diameter former, which represented the internal size of the well shaft, the cleaned and labelled stones in courses K to A were placed in their original arrangements using the sketches and photographs from December 2009.

7) The courses were delivered in turn to Phil Selby who over three days completed the reconstruction of the stonework and backfill, shown in 8).

9) & 10) The final handover to Town Mayor, Cllr. Maureen Stockwood and County Cllr. Martin Southers took place at a well-attended ceremony on 12th November.

WHAT WAS FOUND IN THE BACKFILL?

When archaeologists discovered the Roman well alongside the A46 in August 2009 they found that the

stone lining went down to 3 metres. We removed the top 1.2 metres for the reconstruction. Phil Selby, who reconstructed the well that, deceptively, already looks like it has always been there, used a method similar to that used by the Romans. They dug a cylindrical hole, 2 metres in diameter and built the well, which is 80 cm in internal diameter, in the middle. As each course of stones was laid they backfilled the rest of the hole. The backfill was made up mostly of clay and stones, but there were animal bones, bits of wood, a broken Millstone Grit quern stone, a piece of vesicular basalt, broken bricks, tiles and pieces of pottery mixed in with it. The pottery fragments could be dated and three of them suggested the most likely date for building the well was 160AD. The well fell out of use in the late 3rd to early 4th century. It was filled up and a gravel road laid over it. One piece of pottery found confirms this date for the end of the life of the well. Some of the road gravel found when the well was being deconstructed has been set in concrete on top of the reconstructed well in the cemetery. Only a short length of the road was excavated, but its trend suggests that it may have led from Margidunum to the centre of Bingham. The vesicular basalt is of a kind not found in Great Britain. It most likely came from one of the volcanic regions along the Rhine Valley. It would have been used in the same way as pumice for scouring the skin while bathing. Although we tried to replicate the original well when it was rebuilt we did diverge from the design in one

place, by using a piece of Roman brick that was found in the backfill in the stonework at the bottom left hand side.

GARDEN FINDS

Readers will recall that in October last year we put leaflets through the doors of 2500 houses in Bingham asking people to collect any bits of pottery and other man-made items when they were gardening. We put out a reminder in the spring this year. We have had 60 responses; some yielding large numbers of finds. Most of the material is 19th or 20th century pottery, but there are a few very interesting ones. These include a Roman coin, a large piece of Roman pottery, some medieval pottery, bits of Tudor Cistercian Ware, many good clay pipe bowls, old glass and interesting bits of metalwork. Most of it has been identified, but some requires the attention of a specialist. This may take a few weeks to do, but our aim is to have everything identified and reports delivered to the individual householders by the end of this year.

THERE IS NOT ENOUGH STREETLIGHTING

In view of the current debate over the merit, or otherwise, of the economies achieved by reduced streetlighting, our researches in the newspaper archives have come across the following item in the Nottingham Journal dated September 1850:

BINGHAM— The gas works at this place is fast approaching completion, and on Saturday evening last the

streets lights were lighted for the first time. Workmen are actively employed in conveying the service pipes into the various shops and dwellings, several of which have been lighted up. The appearance of the town in the evening is quite imposing, and general satisfaction prevails as to the brilliance of the lights, the gas being of superior quality. We are inclined to think that the number of public lights [12] is too limited, but we doubt not their number will be increased at the next general meeting of the ratepayers. Too much praise cannot be awarded to the spirited directors, and we heartily wish that they and the shareholders may realise that their investments merit.

CODA-On 9th February 1855 the Journal reported that at a vestry meeting held on the 6th February, ratepayers agreed to install an additional five lights.



A selection of Bingham Gas lanterns. But where were they?

'WINTER' TALKS

We plan to hold three talks this winter, starting in the New Year. As usual these will be on a Thursday evening in the Methodist Hall starting at 8.00pm. So far we can confirm only one of them. This is *Scandals and Tragedies in Historical Bingham* by David Mason and will be on 1st March 2010. The talk is based on information obtained from newspapers published in the period 1768 to 1870. We have asked an archaeologist who has worked on the A46 to give us a talk, but have not yet agreed a date. There will also be an illustrated talk by Robin Aldworth on the photographic archive of Bingham and the use of photography and image manipulation as a heritage research tool. The date for this depends on when the A46 talk is given.

BHTA Membership

costs you only a minimum of £2.00 per annum.

For this *Discovering Bingham* is delivered every quarter to your home and up-dates on our activities are e-mailed directly to you. **WHY NOT JOIN NOW?**

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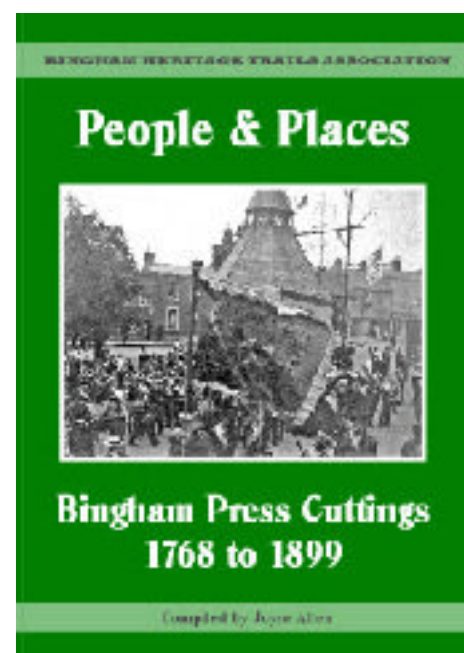
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PEOPLE & PLACES Bingham Press Cuttings 1768 to 1899

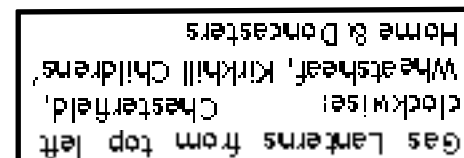


Members of BHTA searched the newspaper archives at the Local Studies Centre in Nottingham City library looking for references to Bingham in articles, adverts and court hearings covering a period of more than one hundred years from 1768.

The stories that have been collected into this booklet relate largely to places we can still see today, so while we walk around the town we can imagine the scenes that were played out here during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Price: £3.50 Available from Bingham Library, Eaton Place Newsagents or order direct from BHTA by e-mail: bhta@binghamheritage.org.uk

Special offer to members of £3 when purchased direct from BHTA



Gas Lanterns from top left
clockwise: Chesterfield, Whatechef, Kirkhill Children's Home & Doncasters