

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

DIAMOND JUBILEE TREE PLANTING CEREMONY



BHTA is best known for researching local history and archaeology but is also concerned with the natural history of the local environment. Last year these two elements came together when we discovered that when Bingham Cemetery opened in 1888 it was planted with a selection of unusual trees as an 'Arboretum', and we managed to identify 29 surviving species. Following a suggestion by committee member Joyce Allen it was agreed that this year we should present a 30th specimen tree to commemorate the Diamond

Jubilee of HM the Queen. On Tuesday 20th November an Amelanchier tree was formally handed over to Bingham Town Council by BHTA chairman Peter Allen.

Four pupils of Carnarvon Primary School who took part in a competition to design a cover for a new junior version of the Heritage Trail leaflet were invited to help plant the tree. The winning design - by Hannah Branson - is to appear on the cover whilst those of runners-up Joseph Jackson, Luke Markham and Jessica Starling will appear inside. Bingham Mayor Councillor

Tracey Kerry gave a speech of thanks. Judith Swann, a Deputy Lieutenant, spoke on behalf of the Lord Lieutenant of Nottinghamshire, reminding us that the day was particularly appropriate as it was Her Majesty's 65th wedding anniversary.

Amelanchier grandiflora 'Ballerina'

This small deciduous tree was chosen as the most suitable for the Jubilee tree in the Arboretum in the cemetery. It met most of the criteria we looked for. Its position overlooking The Banks means that as well as those visiting the cemetery, people passing will be able to see and enjoy its changes through the



seasons. In early spring the leaves of the tree are green tinged with bronze, against which the showy, relatively large white flowers are seen to

advantage. The leaves change to a uniform green in the summer and in autumn turn orange and red with red to purple fruits, which are soon eaten by birds. It is



happy in any position, is hardy and low maintenance and pest free. It is everything we need.

This tree was sourced locally from Frosts Nurseries on the old Fosse Way and the plaque, inscribed, "Presented to Bingham by Bingham Heritage Trails Association In celebration of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II, 2012", was provided by Malcolm Lane & Son of Cropwell Bishop.

Our thanks go to Neil, the Town Council groundsman, who gave us advice on a position for the tree and help with the planting.

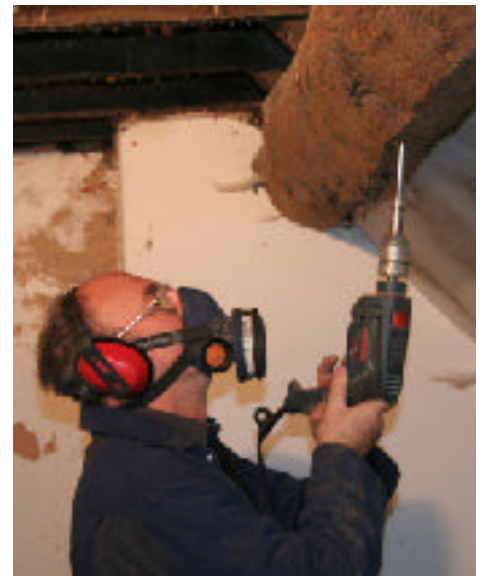
HOUSE HISTORIES

Regular readers will know that one strand of the current "Roots and Development of Bingham" project is to investigate the history of a number of the older buildings in the town. All the field work has now been done and the

two experts have retired to their laboratory and drawing boards and should be producing reports over the next couple of months. A detailed description of the process of tree ring dating appeared in our last newsletter. So far we have drilled beams in 11 properties. Three more we hoped to do were unsuitable (pine or elm beams cannot be dated). We are grateful to the owners or occupiers who agreed enthusiastically to take part in the exercise. None of them can show you where the cores were taken; it is masked so well afterwards! Budgetary considerations limited the number of full house histories to five key properties plus a cursory look at two or three more. One exercise was carried out for which we did not have to pay. The new Health Centre developers agreed to fund a full dating exercise and survey of Close Acre before it is demolished, which our contractors did during the summer.

Some interesting thoughts are already emerging. The Manor House yielded some good tree ring samples but the attached cottage did not. We have always assumed the cottage would have been built after the Manor House, as some sort of servants' quarters. However, the evidence suggests differently. It is likely that the cottage predates the house by about 40 years. Current thoughts are that the house was built around 1710 and the cottage perhaps 1670-80. Also, the lobby at the rear, where the entrance now is, seems to be possibly 40 years or so later than the rest of the house. We

are pretty sure the house was occupied in the 1720s by John Bradshaw, a well off plumber. Perhaps he had the cottage first and then when he was doing well built the house as a



Drilling a beam in the Manor House

sign of his success. Who knows, but it is a good story! What is pretty certain is that it never was a manor house, just the residence of a prosperous family.

One of the outcomes of our analysis and mapping of the 1586 Estate survey was to locate the then ruinous original manor house to the plot between Moor Lane and Station Street. Beauvale House now occupies part of this site. The east wall of the house is of stone work about four feet thick (although now rendered outside and plastered inside) could have been part of that manor house. The cellar has an equally thick stone wall. Test pits in the front garden revealed an expanse of stone flags which at first sight seemed to be a wall. In the event, further digging exposed an area too large to be wall foundations and more

likely to be a yard outside or a floor inside the manor house. We recovered three pieces of glazed floor tile at that level which look Medieval but need checking by an expert. If they are, then we have found the foundations of an inside floor rather than an outside yard. Further wall foundations could be elsewhere in the garden. Beauvale House will have a good story to tell, and is an interesting example of how we may be able to blend the results of the house histories with the test pits.

More of all this when we get the reports.

BINGHAM BENEATH YOUR FEET

Most people have little knowledge of what lies below a spade's depth in their garden, but now that the digging for 2012 has finished and 45 one-metre pits have been dug quite a few residents of Bingham do know what lies under their turf. We have dug in 25 gardens, three schools, one field and one piece of public land. When we were planning this project we, rather tentatively, told the Heritage Lottery Fund that our aim was to dig between 30 and 50 pits because we had no idea how the public would respond to BHTA asking them if they could dig a pit in their

garden. As it happened, nearly all the pits were in gardens that were offered to us by the householder and by the end of the digging season we had compiled a list of addresses for 87 potential sites. In only 11 of these did the householder have second thoughts about a pit in their garden, all for very valid reasons. We still have to confirm that some of the remaining gardens will be available to us next year, but with permissions to dig that have already been given to us we expect to have a total exceeding 60 by the end of next year.

This is entirely due to the kindness, enthusiasm and generosity of the people of Bingham. What has pleased the diggers has been the high level of interest among the householders in the project. We can give credit to Time Team for this. There is an awareness of archaeology among the population and with it an enthusiasm to find out about the distant past in the place where they live. This is a natural curiosity that Time Team has tapped into and from which we have benefited.

On our side, the digs have been thrilling. Until you lift the turf and take out the first 10 cm layer no one knows what to expect. In some of the pits you find a conventional layering of organic topsoil overlying the subsoil. The topsoil and the upper parts of the subsoil



Stone floor and Post hole

usually contain finds of all ages mixed up. They give a clue as to what is likely to be underneath, but you have to get well into the subsoil to find evidence of what may have happened on that site in times gone by. Nearly all the pits have been in central Bingham where we have found evidence of some ancient use of that piece of land. We have unearthed floors, cottage walls, crew [farm] yards, back yards to cottages, old road surfaces, asphalted tennis courts, ornamental garden features, farm tracks, 18th century field drains, demolition layers representing buildings now forgotten, builder's rubble from 20th century building activity, Roman cisterns, post holes left by timber buildings that stood in Roman or medieval times, layers of butchered bones, burials of long-dead pets and rubbish pits. Each of these tells us something about what went on in Bingham in days gone by. When this project is finished we will combine our new knowledge with what we have accumulated from all our other projects and try to develop a story about Bingham town from its earliest days, which we now think may have been in the late Iron Age.

To date, all the field reports about the pits have been written up and the finds and



A garden pit

photographs catalogued. When we have put numbers on each individual find we will send them to the experts for identification.

We should have the identifications from this year's collection early on next year. Starting in April we plan to dig another 15 to 20 pits. When the finds from these are identified we will then try to work out what it all means. Expect something about this late in 2014.

CHRISTMAS CHEER

as reported in the Nottingham Journal:

2/1/1857

The churchwardens and overseers of the poor distributed £8 worth of bread to the poor belonging to the parish, and the sum of £6-5s was also given in 5/- tickets to the most needy of the above parish.

30/12/1851

On Saturday last, Mr and Mrs Ashton kindly supplied many poor persons with beef and plum bun for their dinner on Christmas Day.

31/12/1852

On Christmas day the children belonging to the Wesleyan and Temperance Hall Sabbath schools were regaled with plum cake and tea, and the friends of the Primitive Methodists according to annual custom, had a social meeting, which was numerously attended.

5/1/1855

On Christmas Day, the inmates of Bingham Union [Workhouse] were plentifully regaled with plum-pudding and roast beef.

31/12/1858

On Christmas Eve one hundred and fifty poor persons were presented with a loaf of bread by the churchwardens and overseers of the poor in accordance with annual custom.

BUT IT WASN'T ALL PEACE AND LIGHT

23/1/1819

Several robberies have been committed at Bingham: the pantry of Mr Clifton, mercer, was partly untiled, and some pork, cheese, and mince pies stolen thereout; a pane of glass in the shop window of Mr Wright, grocer, was cut, and some oranges, hats, and nuts etc removed; the same thing was done to one of the windows of Mr Giddings, baker, and some large Christmas buns taken away; and on Saturday night last, a cellar belonging to the same person, was forcibly entered, and some cheeses, biscuits and a considerable quantity of tobacco stolen thereout.

Riotous Roughs in 1860s

A Custom has prevailed in Bingham from time immemorial for a choir of singers to parade the streets at an early hour on Christmas morning. We have no objection to the custom when the party conduct themselves with propriety but we are

sorry to state that of late the custom has been conducted by a band of uncultivated persons accompanied by a detachment of roughs and consequently people are roused from their slumbers by the most discordant sounds mingled with noises of a riotous description. We are sorry to state that a repetition of this disreputable behaviour occurred on Wednesday when in addition, one person had his chamber window assailed with missiles. One of the iron guards which encircle the ornamental trees in the Market Place was torn up and other petty depredations committed. We hope in future the police will be on the alert and put a stop to these disgraceful practices.

2013 BHTA CALENDAR

Theme for the year -
'Ever-Changing Bingham'
£3.50 from
Newsagents & 19, Church Street

2013 LECTURES

8.00pm. Methodist Hall
Admission FREE

Thursday 24th January
Nottingham Caves Survey

David Strange-Walker
PhD MSc

Thursday 28th March
Roman Nottinghamshire

Mark Patterson

Thursday in May - date to
be confirmed - Friends of
Bingham Manor House
Geoff Ashton

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