

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

In compiling this latest issue of 'Discovering Bingham' we find that at least three items either result directly from, or report progress on, topics covered in the March 08 edition. We hope you will be interested in these up-dates and the other material. There are also dates for your diary for our AGM and Hot Pot Supper on page 4.

CROW CLOSE THE NEXT STEP

Our investigation of Crow Close, the site of a deserted medieval village, moves on apace. We have teamed up with Trent & Peak Archaeology and GridNine, a small geophysics company based in Grantham, to do a geophysical survey of the field. They conducted a magnetic survey over the parts where there was evidence of buildings and, afterwards, a resistivity survey in the areas that didn't show any magnetic response. At the time of going to press we await the final report, but have seen preliminary results. The old tracks, field boundaries and some of what we think are the sites of houses show up well on the magnetic survey, but some of the areas that might be buildings showed no magnetic properties at all. When the resistivity was done, however, these areas gave a good response, which demonstrated the value of doing both types



Chris Green with Dave & Angela Hibbitt of GridNine conducting the geophysics survey at Crow Close

of survey. What it all means will require more work, but we have solved one problem.

If you look at the map in the last issue you will see a circular structure about 20 metres in diameter near the boundary of the playing field. On the ground this is a low, circular mound with a ditch around it. There is a "panhandle" shooting off from the south-western quadrant towards the gate. The structure could be a Bronze Age burial mound, the site of an old windmill, or the site of a World War II searchlight. You can imagine what we wanted it to be.

The geophysics was conclusive. In the middle of the mound there was a perfectly circular ring, which gave a strong magnetic response. The "panhandle" was also strongly magnetic. We consulted Margaret Sibley, who has done a lot of research into WWII buildings in

Nottinghamshire, and she found the basic plan for searchlight units built at the end of the 1930s to form protective rings around Britain's major conurbations. Each one had a circular defensive mound up to 60 feet in diameter around a sunken area, about 20 feet in diameter, where the searchlight was set. The defensive mound was shored up around the sunken area with corrugated iron sheeting. The sheeting is probably the cause of the magnetic ring that we found, while the "panhandle" is probably the drain that kept the area round the searchlight dry. Further research by Margaret Sibley revealed that in November 1941 slit trenches were dug near all searchlight units. This will explain a short, linear magnetic anomaly we found just to the south of the ring. This was all very satisfying. Research and sound

investigative work in the field had yielded an answer to a problem. Then we found a local lady, Bridie Gilchrist, that remembered the searchlight well and as a thirteen year old used to visit and take food to the men on the site back in 1941! It sometimes pays to talk to those who were there! However, this is obviously not possible for the other features picked up by the geophysics and for the interpretation of these we await the report of the experts.

MORE ON THE WHEATSHEAF DATE

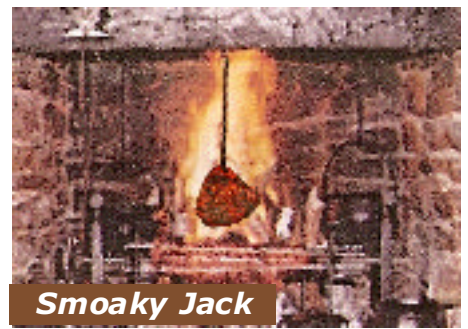
After our piece in the newsletter about the brick in the Wheatsheaf inscribed 'NG 1779', Joyce Allen was continuing our research into newspaper items on Bingham from 1762 onwards. She came across this piece published on 23rd May 1778 in the Nottingham Journal, which might throw some light on the mystery of the inscription.

'A few days ago, died at Bingham age 75, Mr Joseph Gratton, a wheelwright and proprietor of the Wheatsheaf Inn of that place, which business he retired with fair character'.

It would appear that the Wheatsheaf was in existence in 1778. We have not been able to locate an N Gratton in the parish records, but perhaps NG was a relative, eager to expand the business at the Inn and was adding an extra floor to accommodate their guests. Since c.1760 the Turnpike went past the Wheatsheaf which could have made it necessary to expand the premises.

Also in the Nottingham Journal in December 1780 was a notice placed by Ann Gratton of the Wheatsheaf Inn that, Mr Wm Timms, who presumably took over the business from Joseph Gratton, was retiring because he had married Mrs Elizabeth Cole of Normanton who, to quote the paper, 'was an agreeable lady in possession of £600 per annum', Ann Gratton wished to inform 'all those who have been pleased to favour her with their orders in the Wheelwright business', that she has sold the business to a Thomas Wilson. She recommends him to their future attention as, 'a person well qualified to carry on the said business and whose honesty and sobriety together with his punctuality and dispatch make him worthy of recommendation'. What a reference! Notices of this kind were common when businesses were sold.

The newspapers of the time, give an excellent picture of the variety of trades and business carried on in Bingham. One of these mentioned in the Journal in 1775 is a notice concerning the death, aged 84, of Mr Samuel Shepperson, a Whitesmith. This was one of the trades carried on by Mr William Timms in his Smith's shop on the Turnpike Road in 1780 and it is also mentioned in the 1841 census. The internet came in useful here, telling us that a Whitesmith made, among other things, 'Smoaky Jacks', which were vertical spits rotated by air currents in the flue, 'Spring Curtains' which was some kind of security device fitted to locks and recommended for outside doors, and 'wind up frogs'. Does anyone know



what they were? Seems like an eighteenth century Handicentre.

Incidentally, researching newspapers is fascinating, but time consuming for one person. If anyone is interested in spending a couple of hours here and there, please ring Joyce Allen on 01949831575.

LUCKY COINCIDENCES

In our last newsletter we mentioned a Board School report that referred to a school group photograph taken in April 1879 of which no prints seemed to have survived. Then Adrian Hemstock, visiting friends in Southwell was shown their family photo album. Among the various family portraits was a faded and rather fuzzy print (Photo A), which is clearly a copy of the missing picture which they have agreed we can add to our growing collection of early photographs of Bingham.

Our luck didn't end there; Mrs Margaret Linley, born and bred in the town, also offered to show us some of her collection that included a set of six photographs taken in 1902 by her grandfather C. E Cooke who owned the watchmaker's business on the corner of Market Street and Union Street. The event he recorded was the celebration in the Market Place of King Edward VII's coronation. With



In the bottom left-hand corner of the 1902 picture with the float is part of a banner. In another shot from Mrs Lindley's set (not shown

permission from the library, the BHTA collection already includes one of these pictures from the NCC 'Pictures the Past' archive but the remaining five shots were new to us. In the picture (Photo B) the framework beyond the Butter Cross includes the lettering 'E VII R' with a crown, Prince of Wales feathers and assorted flags. This clearly identifies the occasion which, in the NCC catalogue is incorrectly listed as George V's coronation. There are also other intriguing details in the picture.

Mrs Dot Mabbott is another 'Binghamite' who has allowed us to scan many pictures from her extensive collection. One of these (Photo C) of a patriotic float in the north-west corner of the Market Place but we had no information on the date or the occasion. When we compared this with the bottom right-hand corner of Mrs Lindley's picture we realised that this clearly shows the same float with Britannia and others dressed up to represent various nations of the British Empire. So another question was answered. It is also interesting to see how the south-west corner has changed; the present Handicentre and Bird's bakery are still recognisable but all the other shops and houses have disappeared, being replaced by the Co-op and the Eaton Centre.

here) we see it again carried by the members of the 'Bingham Ancient Imperial United Order of Oddfellows' Before trade unions and the NHS the Oddfellows Friendly Society was set up in 1810 with branches all over the country to provide health care and pensions for the working classes who made small regular donations to the society's funds. Over the years there was a great deal of fragmentation of local branches, many of which eventually became building societies such as the Imperial Building Society in Nottingham and the Manchester Unity Building Society. With

the setting up of the National Health Service in 1948 a major part of their function became redundant but larger branch such as Manchester Unity had one of the main sources of actuarial welfare data which was use by the government in setting up the NHS and many of the branch staff were employed by the Civil Service in the early years.

If you have any memories of the Bingham Oddfellows or have any period photographs of Bingham please contact us. Even if you have pictures of similar events or parts of the town which are already in our collection, as you will realise from the above, a slightly different angle may include details that were previously missing. So please get out your family picture albums!



MINTON TILES

In our very first newsletter there was a short piece about Minton tiles used in the hallways of some houses in Bingham. Since then we have been told of a few more and several fragments of these tiles have turned up in field walking - one an exact match for one of the pieces in the photograph. Now we have colour, we can show some of them off in their full glory! If



you have a Minton tiled floor we'd love to hear from you and get a photograph if possible.

Herbert Minton started experimenting with the process of encaustic tile making in the 1820s. The method involves pressing coloured clay slip into a pattern incised into the base

tile - a very labour intensive operation. It was a complicated process to ensure the clay had no bubbles, to fuse the clays together and to avoid warping in the kiln. Success for the new product was assured when Queen Victoria had a floor installed at Osborne House. Churches and other public buildings followed, Augustus Pugin, a friend of Minton, used them in his Gothic Revival buildings and soon Minton's tiles were exported all over the world. The development of the railways must have helped expand the market in the UK and pretty soon they were being used to decorate particularly entrance halls in houses. James Walker, who built many of Bingham's fine villas between 1880 and 1910, seemed fond of installing Minton tiles to enhance the appearance of his houses. However some older houses seem to have had them retro-fitted. Perhaps there was a hall-floor salesman hawking his wares in the manner of a modern double glazing person! Did leaflets drop through the letterboxes of Long Acre saying 'we are currently installing quality Minton tiled floors in your area and have a special offer...'!

233 YEARS OF GLOBAL WARMING ?

December 1775 was so mild across the county that newly ripened strawberries were picked and taken to the

Journal offices. Apple and pear trees were in blossom for the third time that year and on Christmas Day a Mr Hutchinson reported eating one of the second crop of apples.

WHAT TO DO WITH THE FINDS

We have made some progress in our quest to dispose of 52,000 finds generated by our field walking project. Nottingham University is upgrading its museum and has appointed a curator to oversee the process. We have made contact with her and she has expressed interest in taking our finds. Nothing is agreed yet, but we are hopeful that she may take everything up to and including the Post Medieval material. We will still be left with over 20,000 mostly 19th and 20th century finds. There is enough here to make a 4 square-metre mosaic, so that idea is still alive. Watch this space.

B.H.T.A
Annual General Meeting
at 7.30 p.m.
Thurs 26th June 2008
The Old Court House
Church Street, Bingham

WE NEED
HOT POT
SUPPER
TABLE HOSTS
for Saturday 8th
November 2008

If you can help or would like more information, please ring
01949 831575

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