

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

DOING A KIBWORTH

You might remember the TV series on BBC Four last year in which Michael Wood studied the history of England through events in the Leicestershire village of Kibworth. One part of his investigation involved digging around 50 one-metre square archaeological exploratory pits to see what they would reveal. In BHTA we had talked about doing something like this a couple of years ago when we realized that having field walked all the farmland there was still a third of the parish covered in houses that we had no knowledge about except from a single archaeological dig done in 2005. The garden survey we have been doing was the first part of the quest to reveal the history of the built-up area; these test pits are the second part.

Our aim is to dig between 30 and 50 pits in different part of Bingham. They will be one metre square and will be up to one metre deep. The ground around each hole will be protected by plastic sheeting. We will take out the soil and subsoil in 10 cm layers. Each layer will be put through a riddle to separate out anything of archaeological interest. The finds will then be bagged up and taken away to be washed and identified. When we have finished each hole it will be filled up and the ground made good. We estimate that each hole will take a day.



BHTA take members and leaders of the 1st Bingham Phoenix Scout Troop off for a 90 minute walking tour of the town's history including a visit to the prison cell in the Town Office. All were released for good behaviour!

There are lots of puzzles about the history of Bingham. We do not know where the original Anglo-Saxon village was, nor where the church was before St Mary and All Saints was built in 1225 AD. We suspect that the street plan for the old part of Bingham was established in the 12th century, but we would like proof. Then there are the matters related to the whereabouts of the medieval St Helen's Chapel and the windmill near School Lane. How long was there a windmill at the top of Tithby Road? There are many other questions we hope to address.

Shortly, we will put in a bid for a grant to do this. Our intention is to start work in September and do most of the digs in the autumn this year and spring and summer 2012.

If you think your garden is a suitable place for a pit or if you would like to volunteer to help with the project please let us know.

NEW BOOK PLANNED

Joyce Allen and her team of researchers in the Newspaper Archive are compiling a selection of press cuttings, dating from 1772 to 1899, that give fascinating glimpses into life in Bingham over this period. These will be gathered together into a 48 page, illustrated book that we plan to publish during the coming autumn. This should be well in time to be available as stocking-fillers on everyone's Christmas present shopping list.

EXCELLENT RESPONSE TO 150th ANNIVERSARY

As we reported in the last issue, we sent out an appeal to local clubs, groups and business for sponsorship to cover the cost of decking the Butter Cross in the Market Place with flowers to mark the 150th anniversary of the completion of the building in 1861. This produced a positive response from well over 20 organisations which has not only covered the cost of flowers but also the creation and installation of the decorations.

Rushcliffe Borough Council Estates Department have approved our proposals for the event. The celebrations will commence at the Annual Town Fair on 11th June and continue at the following Thursday weekly market when BHTA will have an information stand under the Cross and then at the Saturday Farmers' market which will also feature live music under the Butter Cross.

At all these events some BHTA members will don period costumes to portray various town worthies from the early years of the Butter Cross and on 18th June we hope to maintain the Victorian theme with most of the stallholders also in costume. **Three occasions not to be missed!**

BINGHAM'S BAKEHOUSE

BHTA have known for a long time that there was an old bread oven in the cellar of 11A Market Street. We were recently invited to view it by the owners Mr and Mrs Rowell, and imagine our surprise and excitement when we saw it. The front and interior pictured above measures about 10 feet square with the interior height



of the baking chamber about 18 inches. We had with us the heritage buildings expert from Trent and Peak Archaeology, Richard Shepherd, who confirmed it was an eighteenth century oven. He said it was surprisingly large for a village bakery and that an oven of this size would normally be found in a very large country house. He suspects it is quite rare and of some importance in the Nottinghamshire context.

The opening below the oven that looks as though it was a furnace probably was not. It has two rows of corbelled bricks either side with the remains of iron bars across them – maybe it provided a warm space for proving the dough. It extends under the oven for about six feet. The oven would have been heated by burning faggots of twigs inside the oven, then raking these out and placing the bread inside to bake as the oven cooled down. The baker would cut off the burned bottoms of the loaves before sale! The cast iron oven door is probably Victorian although originally the hole could have been stopped up with a day seal. The opening on the right of the photograph leads to

another cast iron door behind which is a tunnel leading into the oven space. There is evidence inside the oven of a similar arrangement on the other side. They were fitted with a cast iron grating with space below to receive ash. The brickwork suggests these were Victorian improvements of some kind – possibly installed to provide additional heat. Our man from T&P is currently cogitating and will be writing it up soon.

If it can be dated back to 1776 we can be pretty certain it was operated by Robert Grant, who rented a "bakehouse only" from the Chesterfield Estate. He had a freehold homestead on the south west corner of The Banks and Tithby Road. We don't understand why, if it was a "bakehouse" only, the oven needed to be underground. It extends underneath a room of the Rowell's cottage and would clearly have had to have been built before anything could be erected above. Was there a shop? Was there a cottage we are unaware of?

In the early 1800s Robert Brice had the bakery here, with a cottage, and was convicted with all the other bakers in Bingham of adulterating their flour with alum. A generous interpretation would be that this was an attempt to keep down prices for the poor. We are told the bakery was kept going by Mr Martin until well after WWII and we have a fuzzy photograph of the sweet shop next door run by the Martins.

Can anyone help us with more information please? Have you any memories or indeed photographs of the shop or the bakery or the cottage?

THE LAST IN THIS YEAR'S SERIES OF WINTER LECTURES



Joyce



Geoff



Peter

Using the overall theme of 'Bingham's People and Places' the latest series of lectures concentrated on three dates; 1841, 1776 and 1586 each of which form the basis of chapters in the BHTA book 'Bingham, Back in Time'. In addition to the data gained from our History of Settlement project each lecture also drew on our other research activities such as delving into the Newspaper Archives, Parish Registers, etc.

1776 Georgian Times

The second of the Winter Lectures, Georgian Times, was given in the Methodist Hall by Joyce Allen and Geoff Ashton. Over the past few months and with the help of a small band of volunteers, they have been researching old records, and from careful

comparison of various pieces of information about the year 1776, have put together a lively and credible portrait of Bingham at that time. Whilst in the USA, Thomas Paine's pamphlet, 'Common Sense' was published in the January, and the Declaration of Independence in July, here in Bingham, £93 was raised for the war, presumably the one we were fighting against both France and America. Previously in 1771, the Town had been in party mood and bonfires were lit in the market place to celebrate the Earl of Chesterfield's twenty-first birthday, the age at which he came into his inheritance. At that time a survey book, listing his property was produced, and this has been one of the sources of information for the talk.

Records of Baptisms, Deaths and Marriages, Trade Directories, the churchyard survey, facts from the census and old newspapers are just a few of the other sources delved into by the group. Some of the points of interest noted, were that the spelling of names could vary quite a bit by virtue of the general standards of literacy. This presented a problem for our researchers who were aiming to transfer their findings onto a database so these variations of spelling had to be rationalised to ensure the data could be searched and analysed. The records of 'deaths' also elicited some very sad, human stories.

In 1783 a tax was brought in for marriages, baptisms and funerals... As Geoff said, "pay to come in and pay to go out."

1586 Tudor Times

Adrian Henstock introduced the speakers, Peter Allen and Geoff Ashton, who showed how the various activities undertaken by BHTA members have allowed them to build up a very credible picture of Bingham from Roman times until, in this case, Tudor times. Peter Allen reminded us how the field walking produced information relating to the distribution of certain types of pottery that could be dated with relative accuracy, and how this made it possible to make some very reasonable assumptions about what was happening over the parish at different times and how the population was making use of the artefacts that were becoming available.

Geoff then went on to explain how current research uses

ONE MYSTERY SOLVED



*In the March issue of *Discovering Bingham* we published a c.1900 picture postcard (above left) that had the caption 'The Dairy Farm, Bingham', asking if anyone could identify the house. One of our readers, Hugh Holbrook, has come up with the answer; it still exists on the Grantham Road. As the pictures show the ground floor windows have changes and the porch has been modified but it is undeniably the same house. Thanks to Hugh who has also allowed us to add many of his own collection of historic photographs of the town to our photo archive. We must also thank Mr & Mrs Butterworth who allowed us to take the modern photo from their front bedroom window to give a clearer view over the hedges and trees that have grown up since the 1900s.*

wills, inventories and parish registers, to help build a much clearer picture of the town through individual records. Citing one such individual, Agnes Musson, he was able to show the difficulties of farming with land divided into strips and scattered throughout the parish, and how a picture had been built of how many strips the good lady owned, and where they were.

Those wills which have now been deciphered and transcribed, have revealed fascinating insights into the way life was lived at the time. One will bequeathed a relative one shilling because, if they had been left nothing, they were entitled to contest the will. It was also quite common for a father to leave

his children the beds in which they slept. Often a child would be willed money, which they could claim only after they had served a term of apprenticeship. Meantime, the family were instructed to educate and care for them.

In his closing remarks Geoff asked for more volunteers to help with transcribing these archive records and adding them to the BHTA database which would then allow further fascinating analysis and research to be conducted. He also commented that it was good to see young people amongst the audience for this talk and hoped that they might be among those who worked with the database in years to come.

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?

The 2011 BHTA Annual General Meeting will be held at 7.30pm at the Court House on **Thursday 30th June**. Following the formal business there will be presentations on some of our activities and visitors are welcome. Light refreshments will also be available.

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