

DISCOVERING BINGHAM

Quarterly NEWSLETTER of the **Bingham Heritage Trails Association**
www.binghamheritage.org.uk Registered Charity No: 1090475 Issue No. 36 - June 2012

BHTA: Increasing public awareness of our heritage in Architecture, Folk & Natural History, Archaeology & Geology

DIAMOND JUBILEE ISSUE

JUBILEE TREE FOR THE ARBORETUM

At the BHTA committee meeting in March, it was proposed that it would be fitting for the Association to commemorate the occasion of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee by planting a tree in the newly labelled arboretum in the cemetery. Agreement was sought from the Town Council, and we are delighted that permission for the planting to go ahead has been granted. BHTA will now talk to the groundsmen to find a suitable location and then we can decide on the most suitable tree. The planting will not take place until Autumn. If you have suggestions for the kind of tree we should be looking for, please e-mail BHTA. (see p.4)

The Barratt brand of sweets still exist, now owned by Tangerine Confectionery that in 2008 purchased it from Cadbury in a job-lot. It has proved impossible, so far, to persuade Tangerine to give us any information on the history of Barratts, even to find out where they were based in 1897. Surfing the web has also produced no leads. Does anyone know anything about this company?



Quite by chance we were given a dirty and corroded metal disc, just slightly smaller in diameter than a 10p coin, and ask if we could find out what it was. With a x10 magnifier it was just possible to make out the words 'diamond jubilee' and a date '1897' which immediately raised our interest. It was passed over to our expert member Neil Cunnington who specialises in coins, medals and other metal objects. He was able to clean it up as shown in the photo above. His research revealed that it was a brass commemorative medallion marking the 1897 Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria issued by a sweet manufacturer for their employees and sold in sweet shops. On the reverse side are maps of the western and eastern hemispheres with the slogan, 'Barratt Co's. British Empire Sweets are Pure'. Then by coincidence we were donated a batch of old photographs which included a picture of three decorated floats assembled in the Market Place in June 1953 to celebrate the Coronation of our Queen. In the foreground is the float with children from Stanhope Way, organised by Mrs Allen. Do any of our readers remember the event?





We gather round for an initial training session at the site of our first test pit and then get down to digging and sieving on one of the garden pits

sediment that was laid down by a flood. The pit was close to Cherry Street and Church Street. Church Street has been flooded within living memory and a newspaper article from 1857 described both of them as heavily inundated after heavy rain, so it

WHAT'S UNDER OUR FEET

Although the Heritage Lottery Fund gave BHTA the money for the *Roots and Development of Bingham* in November 2011 it took a winter of planning and the arrival of warm weather before we could dig the first archaeological test pits. So far we have done 16. The pits are 1 metre square and go down to depths of about 1 metre. We take the soil out in 10 cm layers and sieve it to find out if it contains anything of archaeological interest. The finds are then washed, dried and numbered. Some of them are easy to identify, but the older ones are not and will have to go to the experts who identified finds for us when we did the field-walking project.

Each pit has told an interesting and quite different story. In one, we dug to the edge of what we think is a Roman road with a ditch alongside. The road surface was littered with broken Roman pottery. In another we dug into a medieval rubbish pit with pottery and parts of a horse skeleton in it. In another we found a 19th century garden feature and 100 metres away we found signs of a medieval house that was otherwise unrecorded. One of the reasons we are digging these pits it to try to

find any evidence of the existence of the original Bingham village. Field walking suggests that it was built in the 9th or 10th centuries and we have assumed that it is somewhere near the church. In the very first pit, about 300 metres from the church, we found three pieces of pottery that we think may be 10th century Anglo-Saxon and there have been more since. It was a good start. Another pit was dug to find evidence for a 14th century chapel. What we found was another rubbish pit, but dug in the late 19th century through a compacted surface of stones that looked like a road or a yard and there was medieval pottery above it. Was this something to do with the chapel?

Three of the pits were dug in early May at Carnarvon Primary School and a further three just finished at Robert Miles Junior School while more are planned for Robert Miles Infants School at the end of June.

One pit was dug entirely by one family in their own garden, though BHTA provided the kit, help and supervision. This was a very successful way of working and if anyone else wants to do this please contact us. There was Roman pottery in the pit and at the bottom was a layer of

is not unreasonable to assume that there has been flooding here in more distant historical times.

We have a long way to go before we finish, but already we are finding things about Bingham's history that we did not suspect. It can only get better. If you feel that you would like to take part in this project then please contact BHTA as shown on page 4.

BUDDING ARCHAEOLOGISTS AT CARNARVON PRIMARY SCHOOL

A large piece of 1st century AD pottery, a piece of a mortarium complete with its grinding stone, lots of Roman pottery and a large collection of animal bones, were just a tiny part of the finds, year 5 of Carnarvon Primary School, dug out of the three archaeological pits sited in their school grounds at the beginning of May. Forty five children, some parents and



grandparents took part in the dig, lasting four days. During that time, the children learnt how to dig the one metre square pits to a metre depth, keeping the sides straight and the level flat, passing the soil in buckets to the children sieving the soil, who then passed on their finds, clearly labelled to the washers, who cleared off the mud, so the finds could be identified. The weather was not always kind, after a sunny first day, the rain came down and though they were working under cover, the ground became muddy and made the work difficult. In spite of the weather the children seemed to have enjoyed and benefited from the experience if we are to judge by the responses given in the questionnaires they completed at the end of the four days. Some enjoyed the digging most, some the sieving, some the washing, some just liked being able to get dirty and out of lessons! Most said they found the project fun, interesting, they enjoyed finding out what was there before the school was built, learning how to identify what they had found, and some said it was a 'life experience'. BHTA would like to thank the headteacher, Mr J. Cunliffe, the year five teachers, Mrs. Andreolli and Mr. Hall and the year five children, for allowing us to dig up their grounds and for their hard work, patience and commitment. After the finds have been identified they will be labelled and returned to Camarvon for the children to keep, especially the child who said 'I can look back and say, "I did that".



A FULL HOUSE FOR A46 ARCHAEOLOGY

The final lecture of the 2011-12 season was "Archaeology and the A46"; given by Ursilla Spence, an Archaeologist with the Nottingham County Council who has been overseeing the A46 project since the early investigative stages. After a brief resume of the work of the NCC Archaeology Department, including the Historic Environment Record (HER) - a database for all known archaeology in the County, she mentioned that what followed must be taken with a 'health warning', as the interpretation of the finds is in its very early stages with only the draft report now available. The area under discussion is the A46 from Widmerpool to Farnon, including those places along the line of the A46, Stragglethorpe, Saxondale, Margidunum, East Stoke, and Ad Pontem where finds from the Late Palaeolithic, Prehistoric, Roman and Anglo-Saxon period have been discovered.

From work done ten years ago over the first section - **Widmerpool to Cropwell Wolds** - it was known that the land is mainly poor quality, solid clay which is a possible reason why there is so little evidence of past human activity. To investigate this section a long trench was dug down the middle of the new road which succeeded in revealing some scattered remains. From **Cropwell Wolds to Owthorpe** evidence of prehistoric activity was found including circular round houses and scattered prehistoric activity. Evidence was also found of dislocation of landscape from Roman

times to the Conquest as the result of ridge and furrow ploughing. At several points during her talk Ursilla expressed her great admiration for the Medieval ploughboys and their ability to tame such very difficult terrain.

At **Stragglethorpe** there was an interesting ring of crop-marks, unusual in that it was visible from the ground. This revealed a ditch feature and seven crouch burials thought to date from the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age. Found with some of the inhumations was associated pottery including a particularly handsome beaker of a type rarely found in the County. **Saxondale**, near the site of the 'Stukeley bump', shown on a 1726 engraving and believed to be an Anglo-Saxon meeting place, proved to be a rich area, archaeologically speaking, with a Roman enclosure, Saxon cremation urn burials, bronze age burials and a well preserved section of a Roman road. Seventeen cremations have been found of 6 adults and 11 children. Another intriguing feature was that Roman pots had been used for some of the Anglo-Saxon cremations.

Margidunum yielded multiple Iron Age and Roman settlements. Among the Roman finds were: three properties, two wells, (one of which has been re-sited by BHTA to the Bingham Arboretum Cemetery); 6% of the pottery assemblage was Samianware (the Roman equivalent of Wedgwood) much of which showed signs of damage that had been repaired - was this a Roman pot repair shop? A notable quantity of metal artefacts was also found, including a bronze brooch. There were 17



Ursilla Spence with an appreciative, capacity audience

neonatal (baby) burials – this was very unusual behaviour and is being further investigated. On the west side of the Fosse is a series of enclosures and a cluster of possibly family burials. Another exciting discovery was the foundations of a previously unknown villa. This was shaped as a long rectangle with two projecting wings, one at each end. This is likely to have been a high-status building as pieces of blue slate were found – similar to material at a Roman site in Southwell.

There was relatively little to report for the section from Margidunum to Farndon, apart from evidence of a Civil War skirmish at **East Stoke** and a pit with pottery and grain south of **Flintham** – possibly the site of a Roman roadside tavern. Finally at **Farndon**, there were some truly outstanding finds. The whole area around the Farndon roundabout proved to be an internationally important site due to its large collection of Palaeolithic tools and flints, and for a goat picture – the first example of Palaeolithic cave art in Britain? Flint

fragments were found in a V-shaped pattern – the hypothesis was that these were produced by Palaeolithic hunters knapping their flint tools while waiting for prey, possibly at the confluence of two rivers. The flakes would later have been trampled by animals and then preserved in position by seasonal floods covering them with silt.

The talk was greatly appreciated by the capacity audience, who found it both interesting and informative and there was no mistaking the enthusiasm and knowledge of our speaker.

ROYAL VISITS TO BINGHAM

Nottingham Journal December 1843 The Royal party went by train to Nottingham. The town had a 'general' holiday. Her majesty's stables arrived in Nottingham and they went forward on the Monday to Belvoir. The road from Nottingham to Belvoir was crowded at different points by persons anxious to gaze upon the Royal Party, and at all the villages great demonstrations of welcome were made. The Royal cortege, after passing

through a triumphant arch in the hamlet of Saxondale, arrived in Bingham, where her Majesty changed horses at the Chesterfield Arms. In this town were erected five arches, bearing appropriate mottos, and her majesty was welcomed by the ringing of the church bells, a band of music, and the loyal shouts of the inhabitants, which her majesty graciously acknowledged. In celebration of the royal visit the poor women and children in the town were regaled with tea etc., The Royal party then went through Watton, Sutton Hill and to Redmile where the Duke of Rutland conducted them to Belvoir castle.

Then 155 years later Grantham Journal on October 1998 reported the Princess Royal's visit to the Home Farm Trust, then on Long Acre where La Jolie Ronde offices are now.

Princess Anne is patron of the Trust, which provides day services for people with learning disabilities. She met regular users of the Bingham centre. Manager Lynn Otaki took the princess on a tour of the building, which included a computer area, woodwork shop and sensory garden. The princess, accompanied by Deputy Lord Lieutenant Sir David Naish and lady-in-waiting Lady Carew-Pole, was presented with a framed photograph of the Bingham users by one of them, Beverly Ingleton. The party then visited the Leisure Centre to see a display of work from the Trust's six other centres over the County. The princess met civic dignitaries including Mayor of Bingham Peter Thompson.

There was some disquiet in the town that an opportunity had been lost for the princess to visit Bingham town as well as her charity.

BHTA CONTACTS

General e-mail: bhta@binghamheritage.org.uk

CHAIRMAN: Peter Allen - 01949 831575

VICE CHAIRMAN: Geoff Ashton - 01949 875177

SECRETARY: Jack Wilson - 01949 838275

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Robin Aldworth - 01949 839991

With thanks to **Hammond Harwood** for their support by printing this issue of *Discovering Bingham*