

DISCOVERING BINGHAM

Quarterly NEWSLETTER of the **Bingham Heritage Trails Association**
www.binghamheritage.org.uk Registered Charity No: 1090475 Issue No. 4 - June 2004

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

BUSY! BUSY!

BHTA members have been hyperactive over the past three months during which we held three major public events. There has also been the final concerted effort to get our augmented web site ready for launch, which took place at a special ceremony on March 31st before an invited audience including representatives of the LHI and several local councillors. The publication of the latest BHTA leaflet, describing 'Heritage Walks' in the parish was also announced at the meeting. Free copies are available from the Library and the Court House.



Our 2003/4 series of open lectures, sponsored by Bingham Local Area Forum, continued on February 27th when Rupert Bear, BHTA Project Leader for Crime History, spoke on '1000 years of Crime in Bingham'. The third, and final lecture, 'Building Bingham' was held on April 29th with our Built Heritage Project Leader Geoff Ashton as speaker. Reports of both events follow in this issue.

Now we are turning our attention to the future. Our Annual General Meeting will be held at 7.30 pm. on 30th June at the Moorlands Day Centre. This will be an open meeting to which BHTA members and non-members are cordially invited. After conducting the brief formal business of the

BHTA chairman, Peter Allen, at the launch ceremony, demonstrates the new web site to Councillor Maureen Stockwood - Mayor of Bingham, Mark Radford - Nationwide Building Society and Jean Rider of the Countryside Agency.

evening, we aim to spend the rest of the time in discussing our future programme. This will include the archaeological field walking project and the commissioning of the first professional, detailed survey of Crow Close, as outlined in the first issue of *Discovering Bingham*, but we also welcome other ideas for new research projects. So far, the results of most of our work have been published on our web site but we are aware that a significant proportion of Bingham residents, interested in our work, do not have access to the Internet. We need to look for alternative meth-

ods of disseminating this information. We would welcome any ideas you may have on these topics and the meeting on 30th June will provide an ideal opportunity to start this process. We hope to see you there.

1000 YEARS OF LAW, ORDER, CRIME AND PUNISHMENT IN BINGHAM

In his lecture on February 27th, Rupert Bear told an audience of over 70 that for nearly 1000 years Bingham had been the administrative

centre for law and order of a 'Wapentake' stretching from Flintham to Widmerpool.

Throughout the Middle Ages the onus for crime prevention and penalty lay with the 'Moot'. Every male over 12 years had to belong to a group of nine others, called a 'tithing'. These ten men were responsible for the behaviour of each other, and if one of them went astray the others had to bring him before the court or be collectively held responsible for the crime. Anyone wronged could also call upon the community to form a posse by "raising the hue and cry". By the 1100s the Eyre Court was established, presided over by one of the King's Judges. This evolved into the three-court system, with JPs to handle minor crimes, Quarter Sessions Chairmen for moderate offences and Assize Court Judges for serious cases. This was essentially the same structure until the 1970s. The systems of trial included a variety of 'ordeals'; by Fire, by Water or by Combat. The accused rarely survived these ordeals, whether guilty or not! At the beginning of the 13th Century, by edict of the Pope, trial by ordeal was abolished, however, ordeal by ducking persisted into the 1600s for witches, scolds and prostitutes.

Mr. Bear amused his audience by describing numerous punishments dished out to the wretched criminals of Bingham. In 1299, a lady of the aristocracy was found guilty of adultery and sentenced, by the Archbishop of York, to whipping in Bingham Market Place. In 1620 Anne Bingham was ducked for being a scold and in 1633, Gabriel Eaton

was pilloried in the market place for perjury. On 2nd October 1637, four men were indicted for unlawfully assembling themselves for football! In 1725, John Kettleborough was whipped for stealing a spade. Transportation was meted out for minor offences but some seemed to welcome a free passage to the New World. In 1812, John Marsden was transported to Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania), and shortly afterwards his daughter went too. His son was sentenced to transportation in 1820 for stealing 30 shillings and his younger brother joined the family later!

After the lecture, the members of the audience enjoyed a glass of wine and many took the opportunity to view the display of original artwork, by local artist Kevin Becken, that appear on the Crime History section of the newly extended BHTA web site.



In 1299, William de Breadon forces the hapless messenger to eat the summons for adultery with a local noble Lady. She was whipped for her indiscretion and William was subsequently excommunicated but only for this lack of respect for the enforcement of law and order! Cartoon drawn by Kevin Becken.

BUILDING BINGHAM

On April 29th Geoff Ashton provided his audience of some 70 residents with an interesting and fascinating talk drawing together the stages and processes of the gradual building of Bingham, about who did it and how they did it. He developed his talk by focussing on the growth in housing and business during three main periods: 1700 to 1800 for which there is little documentary evidence; 1800 to 1910 and 1910 to 1920. He also wove into these periods three themes: Women with property; financing the purchase and the 'Great Sale of Bingham' in the 1920's.

Mr. Ashton started by thanking the many house owners in the town who had given him the opportunity to examine and analyse their house deeds. These were the basis of his research together with the census returns between 1841 and 1901, Trade Directories which listed the businesses developed in Bingham and the valuable material in books previously published by Bingham residents Val. Hemstock and Elizabeth Foster.

He explained that perhaps as much as 80% of the land in Bingham Parish was, at one time owned by the Earl of Chesterfield and, later, by Lord Carnarvon. He first dealt with the expansion of Bingham's population and the need for housing. In 1674 Bingham had a population of 530 and this had risen to 1700 by 1911 though it reached a peak of 2054 in 1851. The development of the railways and the knitting industry created a demand for more building during the mid 19th century. His skilful use of

maps and plans showed how the town gradually developed to cater for an increasing population.

The most interesting part of Mr. Ashton's talk focussed on individual houses, when they were built, the people who built, bought and sold them and the people who lived in them. Demonstrating his skill in the study of evidence, observation, deduction and extrapolation, he used some excellent slides to show examples of clues to the age of a building. The science of dendochronology, used to determine the age of wooden beams, has been used to help discover what may be the three oldest houses in the town. Numbers 61/63 Long Acre provided seven beams dated at around 1617; 21 Long Acre with one beam dated as 1650 and one beam at Donkey Green Cottage dated to between 1570 and 1580. However, the scientists are loath to base a conclusion on only one beam that could have been reused from another building.

Mr. Ashton gave a range of other interesting details about the change of use of buildings. Like most villages, many large houses in Bingham were at one time farmhouses; the Post Office house, originally the Needham's farmhouse, parts of which probably go back to the 1650s, was in the early 1900s, the Vaults Hotel. Birds bakers, dating from the 1820s, had been a tailors and a watchmakers. Many of the large villas in the Town were built by farmer James Walker, who borrowed his working capital, on short term loans from his solicitor. Other people borrowed money from friends and family or from the

richer element of the population such as the pharmacist, rich widows and the like – all before mortgages as we know them existed.

Geoff Ashton concluded by revealing that whilst the Earls of Chesterfield had sold land for development, the Earls of Carnarvon who succeeded them preferred to lease the land and receive ground rent. This changed in 1920 when Lord Carnarvon sold a considerable portion of his Estate to finance the work of Howard Carter in the Valley of the Kings in Egypt. This resulted in the discovery of the tomb of Tut'ankhamun in 1922, so ensuring Bingham's place in the history of archaeology and the world!



Geoff Ashton in discussion with interested members of the audience following his lecture.

**COME AND
HAVE YOUR
SAY ON OUR
FUTURE PLANS
7.30 pm.
Wed. 30th June
at the Moorlands
Day Centre**

All BHTA members and non-members are invited to a discussion following a brief Annual General Meeting

IT IS ON THE WEB

In future editions of 'Discovering Bingham', we plan to review some of the new sections on the BHTA web site. In this issue we start by giving our readers a taster of one part of the 19th & 20th Century History section, using research by Eric Sharpe who served in the RAF and is a former Mayor of Bingham.

Wartime Bingham

This 'page' is based on the recollections of residents of the war period and starts with the construction of Newton airfield in 1936. As the grass runway was unsuitable for heavily laden bombers it became the home of 16S. Flying School mainly for Polish airmen. The web site includes pictures of some of the aircraft that operated from Newton during this period. Two of the Polish airmen, Jan Krupa and Henry Marchewicz, married and stayed on in the area after the war. Their memories are included with Henry and his wife Doreen's experiences of living as 'squatters' in a Nissen hut on Langar airfield.

There are other stories of the outbreak of war, Bingham's only air raid and the recollections of a few of the many evacuees who were 'billeted' in the area. One of these was Olive (Halls) Starbuck who recalls in great detail her arrival from Great Yarmouth in June 1940 and the next two years living happily at Granby Station Farm. In 1949 she married one of the farmhands, John Starbuck and returned to live in Bingham.

Other topics covered are the internment of German nationals at the outbreak of hostili-

ties, prisoners of war, the Women's Land Army and the work of the Women's Institute and other organisations in fund-raising activities to support the war effort. If you want to know more, click on: Historical Bingham/19th & 20th Century/Wartime.

CARNARVON SCHOOL AND THE ROMANS

Most people will have heard of Margidunum, the Roman site at the north west extremity of the Parish but did you know

that Carnarvon School is built on the site of a Roman villa / farmhouse? During the building of the school during the late 1960s workmen unearthed a skeleton and pieces of pottery. In advance of the building operations, an excavation was carried out by Mr C Ashton, of Toot Hill School and Tony Gregory of Nottingham University. They established that this was the site of what was probably a villa with luxury features such as a tiled roof and a heating system from around the second half

of the first century AD. Later in 2002, during building work for new classrooms a well and further pottery fragments were identified as Roman by archaeologist, Tony Sumpter. Pictures of the well are already in the Photo Library of the web site



This splendid jar had pierced lugs through which suspension ropes or basketry were fixed to lower it down a well to raise water. The well at Carnarvon School was sealed to protect it rather than excavated to avoid delaying the building work in 2002.

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Recently, BHTA were given the opportunity to photograph some of the artefacts held at the Castle Museum. With the help of Ruth Leary of the Trent and Peak Archaeological Unit of the University of Nottingham, a further illustrated page has been added to the Roman section of the web site since the official launch in March. The importance of the Carnarvon School site lies not only in what it tells us about who lived here in the Roman period but also in that it provides information to help us reconstruct the rural landscape around Margidunum.