

# 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

## THE STORY SO FAR...

*In April we celebrate our fifth birthday. Before we give you the exciting news of the progress made with our current field walking project, some of our newer readers might like to know how it all started.*

*BHTA was founded in April 2000 with the aim of raising awareness of the richness of Bingham's heritage. Later that year, the Association was successful in winning an award from the Local Heritage Initiative to build a web site, publish five, free leaflets and design a set of wall posters about Bingham. The second LHI award in 2002 allowed BHTA to more than double the size of the web site. Launched in March 2004, this now averages 64 visits a day and is functioning as a resource for schools in the town. At the same time we published a sixth leaflet on public footpaths in the parish and established an oral history archive for Bingham. 2002 also saw the start of our series of free public lectures. These have proved extremely popular and are now in their third year. (see pages 3 & 4)*

*Anyone can join BHTA; membership costs only £2 a year. The committee has also given an undertaking to support anyone who wants to do any research about Bingham's heritage and help them publish it. One such project is a survey of the churchyard initiated by the U3A and due to start in the spring (see page 2).*

*If you have energy and an enthusiasm for the town's heritage, our contact details are on page 4.*

**Now read on.....**

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD WALKING IN BINGHAM

*- bringing local history to light and life*



*Field walking volunteers in action on Starnhill Farm*

In November 2004 we won an award from the LHI to do an archaeological survey of the arable fields in Bingham parish: a total area of 890 hectares. This is only the second such survey to be carried out in Nottinghamshire in recent decades. Mike Bishop, the Nottinghamshire County Archaeologist, advised BHTA on setting up the project. Archaeologists from Trent & Peak Archaeological Unit of the University of Nottingham trained local volunteers to do the survey. They will continue to provide back-up and professional expertise throughout the three-year project. The Crown Estates, which owns the land, and the local farmers have been very encouraging and the project was able to start in December. This is a winter activity. Only then are the ground and crops in a

suitable condition for the field walkers to see enough of the soil to spot anything of interest lying on the surface. The way that the survey is carried out is quite simple. Lines are marked ten metres apart across each field. Volunteers walk slowly along them scanning the one-metre wide strip of ground on either side of the line that is marked off in five metre 'stints'. By this method 20% of the total area is explored in detail.

Everything of interest is picked up, put in a bag, labelled with its location and then passed on to the team that is looking after the finds. Their task is proving as time consuming as the field walking as they have to wash, sort, classify and record all the finds onto a database. This will be used with computer mapping technology to produce maps showing the



*Sue Hodson washing finds. Below, muddy ropes need washing - Joyce & Peter Allen at the tub while Geoff Ashton sorts the tangles!*



distribution of different types of artefacts. This may reveal new insights into occupation and land use, from Neolithic hunters to manuring with Victorian night soil, as well as changing patterns of field size and farming methods. While the walking is limited to the winter season, this work will continue throughout the year. Anyone who doesn't fancy trudging across muddy fields would be more than welcome to join in on this task.

Bingham has a very rich archaeological heritage and the finds made so far reflect this. We know from previous work that people have hunted and lived in the parish from the earliest days of the Stone Age. In the past, finds have been made from the Bronze Age and there is an un-

excavated Iron Age settlement in the parish. The Roman settlement of Margidunum lies at the edge of the parish. Saxons moved into the area soon after the Romans left and there have been settlements or a village here ever since.

In the 50 hectares that have been surveyed in the first three months of field walking, there have been some beautiful and interesting finds. Among them are a polished stone axe head, flint scrapers, knives and flakes. A considerable amount of Roman pottery has been found in one or two areas: including Samian ware, utilitarian grey ware and white ware. One sherd has been provisionally identified as Saxo-Norman, but there are several pieces of 13<sup>th</sup> century green glaze. Post-medieval midlands purple glaze is fairly common and there are some nice pieces of 18<sup>th</sup> century slipware. Most of these probably came into the fields with night soil. This is almost certainly the reason for the abundant 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery and clay pipes found in some fields. Brown glazed red ware, which was commonly used for dairy utensils, is found everywhere. Among the odd finds are the end of a telescope, bits of unidentified bone, hone stones, large iron nails, a farmer's belt ring and fragments of beer flagons that farm workers used to take to the fields on hot days during the harvest.

**This project has only just begun and it can only get more interesting.** At present BHTA has a team of over 40 voluntary field walkers. We still need more people if the



*Volunteers meet to see a selection of washed finds and hear Jenny Brown (below) of the Trent & Peaks Archaeological Unit, explain what has been picked up.*



project is to be completed on schedule. They do not need any special archaeological knowledge; the experts will explain how to conduct the search and what objects are of interest. Walking is carried out in three hour sessions in the mornings and afternoons and you can make a commitment to as few or as many sessions as you wish. For more information contact Peter Allen – see page 4.

## **MAPPING THE CHURCHYARD**

In the spring, BHTA are joining forces with the Bingham University of the Third Age (U3A) Family History Group, and anyone else interested, on a graveyard mapping project.

The plan is to plot the positions of gravestones in the churchyard of St Mary and All Saints' Parish Church. The Rector has many (and increasing) enquiries about the location of graves from people tracing their family history. We would build on the existing alphabetical list of names and ages (in the Nottinghamshire Family History Society Monumental Inscriptions Records) to produce a map showing the placement of individual graves with details of inscriptions.

As well as placing the plans and indexes with the Rector and the Library, we hope they will be added to the BHTA website, to allow on-line searching of the graveyard. The information will also be used in other BHTA heritage projects, such as incorporating individual details into house histories. Many of Bingham's 'movers and shakers' are buried in the churchyard and it would add interest and, in some cases, hard information to know where their memorials are. Makers of gravestones will be noted for research on the development of trade in the town. In particular, to build up a history of Stephen



*Bingham Parish Churchyard.*

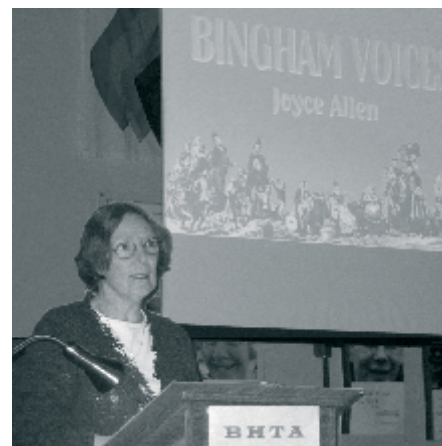
Squires and his son Oliver; monumental masons from the 1870s to the late 1920s at the house that is now occupied by the Bingham Funeral Directors.

The U3A Geology group has recently examined the geology of churchyard monuments and some time ago the Natural History group investigated the lichens. We are adding to this a survey of the churchyard's abundant natural history. We may then be able to produce a leaflet for a Churchyard Trail, bringing all these elements together, to make a fascinating addition to the existing series of BHTA leaflets. Geoff Ashton (for BHTA) and Sue Hodson (for U3A-875963) are co-ordinating the churchyard mapping project. The basic work does not require huge funds, but the production of a leaflet and new web pages will require external funding, sources of which are currently being sought. If there is anyone out there with access to sponsorship, Geoff's number is on page 4!

## NEWS FLASH

As a result of the press coverage we have received for our latest project, we have been contacted by people with offers of help with the planned survey of Crow Close. One is the possible use of infra-red photography that might reveal hidden secrets of the deserted Medieval village on the site. The other is an offer to use laser topographic survey equipment to supplement the geophysical survey that we plan to carry out. If any of our readers have any other ideas that might help us in our work, please let us know!

## BINGHAM VOICES



Do you sometimes think that Bingham is a boring little town with no significant history? Well you would have to revise that opinion had you heard a talk given by Joyce Allen, at the Methodist Church Hall on Thursday evening, the 24<sup>th</sup> February.

Joyce, a hard working committee member since the inception of BHTA, helped by Jack Wilson, BHTA secretary, has done a lot of research into school logbooks of the period, parish magazines and other old records. As a result, she was able to give us an insight into the lives of Bingham people in the 1870's, and with gentle humour bring us a little of the colour and flavour of the town as it was then.

Her narrative was interspersed with observations, originally made by various town characters of the time, but voiced by Geoff Ashton, deputy chairman of BHTA. The presentation was further enhanced by some wonderful old photographs shown on recently purchased power point equipment.

Bingham, she told us, has never had an aristocracy as such, so 'movers and shakers' for the town were people like farmers, shopkeepers, doctors, lawyers, and most importantly, church ministers. The Reverend

Miles, after whom the Robert Miles School is named, being an important example. They were our aristocracy, and had influence on most of what happened in the town. This of course, included education, much of which was funded by subscription, but partly, by government grant. If standards were not kept up, the grant could be cut, and falling standards could also result in a Head Teacher being sacked. More stick than carrot in those days!

As levels of school attendance were one of the factors that determined payment of the grant, it was a constant headache for teachers that children were often away from school either working in the fields, or employed in various other ways.

In those days, teachers would cane disobedient or badly behaved pupils. One boy was caned for poking a stick through a keyhole into the eye of another child. We were invited to wonder what the

child was doing that put the eye at keyhole level.

Mr Jones, Head Teacher at the Wesleyan School was from Wales, Joyce told us; a rather serious man who would get very upset about the amount of truanting. Poor man – he had a lot to cope with; not only was there a great deal of absence due to children working, but many illnesses were rife at that time.

Celebration days found no favour with Mr Jones. Picnics, fairs and the various festivals only meant more absentees to him. However, the inhabitants of Bingham seemed to find many reasons to take a day off and come together to have a jolly time. Strong drink was frowned upon by many in the town, but the Reverend Miles seems to have been in favour of an occasional tipple; in strict moderation **of course**. It is comforting to know that life for those Bingham folk, in spite of poverty, dirt and disease, was fun sometimes.

## DON'T MISS

The final public lectures in the current 2004-5 series.

All welcome at the Methodist Church Hall for a 7.30 pm. start.

## April 28th BROKEN POTS

**Roman finds around Bingham**

Speaker: Ruth Leary

## B.H.T.A. Fund-raising Event

**Wednesday  
March 16th  
WINE TASTING  
with Jack Wilson**

Infants School Hall

at 7.30 pm.

Tickets £8 incl. light food

**RING 831575**

## HOW TO CONTACT OUR OFFICERS

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ALLEN Joyce	COMMITTEE. Membership & Minutes Sec.	107 Grantham Road. 831575
ASHTON Geoff	VICE CHAIRMAN Built Heritage, Coordinator of field walking (Finds)	19 Church Street. 875177
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SMITH Hilda	COMMITTEE. Oral Histories	11 Abbey Road. 837781
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STOCKWOOD Tony	COMMITTEE. Town Council Representative	46 Tythby Road. 875778
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## ARE YOU AN EXPERT?

If you have specialist knowledge of

C17th to C19th Pottery,

Glass, Coins,

Animal teeth & bones, etc.

**PLEASE GIVE  
US A RING**

STOP PRESS

## CONGRATULATIONS

to Val Henstock and Dot Mabbott who received civic awards from the Mayor of Bingham on Saturday 19th February. For Val, this was in recognition of her historical research into the life of the town and to Dot for the photographic history which she has compiled.