

DISCOVERING BINGHAM

Quarterly NEWSLETTER of the **Bingham Heritage Trails Association**
www.binghamheritage.org.uk Registered Charity No: 1090475 Issue No. 15 - March 2007

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

NEWSLETTER NOW IN FULL COLOUR!

As you will have already noticed, things have changed with this first issue of 2007! The local estate agents, Hammond Harwood, have generously offered to print future issues on high quality paper by laser printer in full colour. The content of the publication will be similar but the text should be more legible and the opportunity to include good quality, colour pictures will provide our readers with more information and, we hope, enjoyment.



At the first of our 2007 lecture series on 11th January, field walkers in the audience could be heard discussing the recent cold, wet and windy weather and how difficult this makes their work. Why would they do it, you have to wonder, but Peter Hammond our speaker for the evening, a local archaeologist with a huge fund of knowledge and boundless enthusiasm for the work he does, opened our eyes to the excitement of finding an item and the puzzle-solving aspect of discovering who made it, when it was made, and how it came to be there. Peter's speciality is clay tobacco pipes. At the age of twelve, he and his brother found a clay pipe bowl and it changed Peter's life, ultimately leading him to becoming an archaeologist. He began his talk by saying how widespread clay pipes are and therefore are easy to find. This is in great part due to the practice of spreading night soil, mixed

with general rubbish on to local fields but they can be found in many places; gardens and allotments in particular. They were used rather in the way cigarettes have been used in recent years. The stem was rather prone to breakage but it didn't matter too much as they were inexpensive enough to be discarded and replaced by another.

One of the ways in which the earlier pipes can be distinguished is by their small bowls. This was due to the fact that tobacco, when first introduced, was an expensive

commodity. They also have a less upright shape than later models. A dramatic change in size and shape came about between 1600 to 1700 as tobacco became less expensive and more readily available, incidentally making them very useful to archaeologists for dating. But early smokers ran a risk as they were thought to be on fire and dowsed with water! Clay pipes found near Bingham that are dated to around 1640 may show Civil War links, which is an indication of how field walkers help bring history alive by their discoveries.>



After his lecture Peter Hammond discussing finds that members of his audience had brought along.

VESTRY MEETING MINUTES

Later, pipes became more upright and the bowls larger and then in the 18th century came the long pipes with a spur beneath the bowl so they could be held more comfortably when hot. 19th century pipes are more decorative and have been found with quite intricate designs and busts of famous people like Wellington and Peel. Pipes from mid 19th century are found with satirical or comical decoration, and from France, with vivid coloured ornamentation using enamel applied for extra artistic effect.

Peter went on to describe the research he does into the pipe makers, of whom there were many, although it does not appear to have been one of the most profitable of businesses. This takes him into museums and archives to study written records, and from sources such as probate inventories, indentures, registrations of births and deaths, helps him build a picture of this close community. At the end of the lecture the audience were invited to examine examples of clay pipes that Peter had brought with him, including pipes made in the Nottingham area that can be recognised by their fluted decoration.



Through the good offices of the Rector, we have recently been able to examine a volume of minutes of the Vestry Meeting.

The book, shown above, is shortly to be offered to Nottinghamshire Archives. Prior to 1894 the "Vestry" Meeting was the only parish government in England. This was a meeting of the ratepayers that normally met monthly in the Church Vestry; hence its name. The "Vestry" had not been established by any law, but had evolved through practical necessity, to look after local matters such as the Poor, the Roads, the Church, the Lock-up and the Pinfold.

However, by the 1890s the "Vestry" had outlived its usefulness. It confused church and civil affairs, and it was being eclipsed by the proliferation of local "Boards" that had sprung up after each piece of legislation. By 1894 a parish could have its various needs met by a Burial Board, a Sanitation Board, a School Board, and a Water Board, to name but a few. Whilst these Boards were elected annually, they were not democratic as some ratepayers had more than one vote. Caught between the self-created "Vestry" and the array of undemocratic Boards, Local Government was ripe for reform. The great Victorian Prime Minister, W.E. Gladstone, piloted the 1894 Local Government Act through the House of Commons.

The majority of meetings recorded dealt with only one item of business, so several meetings would be held during the year for different purposes. The Rector was ex officio chairman, but when he was (frequently) not present the meeting would elect its own chairman. The first minutes in the Bingham volume are dated 7th August 1862; we do not know of any earlier volume. This meeting was called to agree a rate of 2½d for the purpose of 'necessary repairs of this church and churchyard fences and for other purposes chargeable thereon according to law'. The meeting was chaired by Rev. Miles, the Rector, and attended by George Oakes, Joseph Hemstock, John Welch and John Brown, all of whose signatures are on the page. A meeting on February 27 1863 was held 'pursuant to a notice given on the church door for the purpose of making out a list of persons liable to serve the office of constable for the ensuing year'. A list of eight names was drawn up to be submitted to magistrates: William Harris (farmer), Ebenezer Hutchinson (veterinary surgeon), William Marston (carrier), William Brewster (labourer), George Cheetham (cattle dealer), William Wall (cottager), William Rayson (watchmaker)

and John Wesson (cordwainer). All names we have met in various deeds, the churchyard survey or other studies!

The meeting of March 27 1884 agreed a list of names to be submitted to the Magistrates, 'as proper and suitable for overseers'. Unusually this meeting (held annually) had two items of business – it also appointed Mr Brett as 'waywarden'. Other meetings would include setting the remuneration for the 'Collector' to make out and collect the sanitary rate (echoes of the evidence of night soil we find during field walking on our current project!). Other meetings sanctioned the purchase of land to allow Chapel lane to be widened, to install a drain on Mill Hill (Tithby Road), for electing inspectors 'under the William IV lighting and watching Act' and agreeing a budget (£60) 'for the purposes of the said act'. One meeting about lighting approved the installation of a new street lamp. £3 was to be allowed for the collection of the gas rate.

The volume of minutes contains tantalising snippets of life in Bingham during the nineteenth century. We could do with transcribing the minutes in full to make a proper examination of them – any volunteers?

ON THE JOB TRAINING

When the archaeological field-walking project began in November 2004 none of us had any idea what we would have to learn in order to do it. We soon found that doing a survey of 850 hectares in four winters and processing the finds (35,000 to date) is a complex business. It took two seasons to develop the right

management structure for the project and appropriate protocols for the various processes. We have learned how to lay out a field before doing the field walking, how to keep records of our activities, organise the washing and numbering of finds and build and populate the database. We have even designed and made much of the kit.

Any field walker will tell you that such matters as handling the 50 metre ropes that we use for marking out the lines that we walk, keeping to straight lines and getting the numbering right for the finds in the field are simple basic skills that we had to learn. Another, more gratifying skill we have acquired is to be able to recognise what we pick up. Most of the field walkers can identify Roman and medieval pottery, humanly modified flints, post-medieval pancheon ware and a 17th

century clay pipe bowl even when they are partly covered in mud. It is a very satisfying, almost spiritual feeling, knowing that you may be the first person to touch a flint tool after it was dropped 6000 years ago or a fragment of a jug of Nottingham green glaze ware, made nearly 800 years ago.

The project is heavily dependent on computing. The design and development work are in the hands of one person, but others have had to learn how to input data into the Access database. The mapping is done in software called ArcGIS9, which we use to measure the grid references for every find logged in the database as well as to plot their distribution on maps.

There are some tasks that we leave to specialists. These include photographing,



Margaret Sibley is just one example of an individual who brings a special talent to the work of BHTA. She has drawing and painting in her genes; she is at least the second generation in a family of artists. Many readers will be familiar with her sketches of local buildings but recently she has started sketching some of our field walking finds. Above are two examples of her rendering of flints and a clay pipe fragment. When it comes to fine and subtle detail there is a long tradition in archaeological circles that a good sketch can give far more information than a photograph.

drawing and identifying finds. We consult experts with decades of study behind them on Roman, medieval, post-medieval and 19th century pottery, flints, stone hand axes, clay pipes, glass and bones. Some of their knowledge rubs off on us and in some ways this is the thrill of the project, making a link with our past and gaining a little understanding about it.

There are around 60 people actively engaged in the project at the moment. Each one has something unique to give to it and something special to take from it. Together they form a team and in the end it is this skilful working together that will see us do something special for Bingham.



From left to right: Councillor Martin Suthers and Town Mayor Francis Purdue-Horan, our Vice Chairman Geoff Ashton and Councillor. John Eagles at the unveiling of the new Heritage information board in the Market Place.

NEW HERITAGE PLAQUE FOR THE MARKET PLACE

A new Heritage Plaque was unveiled on 23rd January at the corner of Bingham Market Place and Market Street, replacing one erected in 1994 which had become dilapidated. The plaque concentrates on the history of the Market Place and is divided into two parts. The upper panel lists significant events and activities which have taken place there over the past 700 years and the other contains a map with descriptions of historical buildings and other heritage features to be seen from the plaque.

These include: The basic layout dates from the 1200s; in the 1600s there was a

pillory; a 'madman' was held in a small specially-built prison for 30 years in the 1700s; the Butter Cross, built in 1861, replaced an earlier structure where butter & cheese was sold on market days; in Georgian and Victorian times 'Statutes' or 'Hiring Fairs' were held each November and the frontage of Beauvale House was built about 1840 but the rest dates from the 1700s or earlier. If you would like to know more, spend a few minutes next time you are in the town.

The new plaque was supported by Bingham Town Council and Nottinghamshire County Council as part of a Greater Nottingham Groundwork Trust project which also included the landscaping of the corner site with new railings and notice board. The historical content was researched by Geoff Ashton and Adrian Henstock and the sketches of buildings drawn by Margaret Sibley, all of BHTA, assisted by Councillor George Davidson.

2007 SEASON BHTA FREE PUBLIC LECTURES

Sponsored by NCC
Rushcliffe Members Forum

Lectures will all be held on
Thursday evenings at 7.30pm.
in the Methodist Church Hall.

8th March

Adrian Henstock
**Georgian Coaching Days
Turnpike Roads of the
Bingham & Newark areas**

10th May

Joyce Allen
What the Papers Say

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