

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

DON'T FORGET YOUR 2008 BHTA CALENDAR



Readers will know we have produced a BHTA calendar since 2000. We have used these to publicise our activities and to generate funds. We have included pictures of



Market Street in a new light! by Adam Thornicroft. Just one example of the stunning digital images, created by pupils of Toot Hill School, to appear in the new BHTA 2008 Calendar.

artefacts, old houses, old views of Bingham and other 'heritage' material. To keep costs down we printed the calendars ourselves and used a print finishing firm to bind them. This year we are taking a quantum leap forward. Last summer a group of pupils at Toot Hill School used some of 'our' heritage pictures as the basis for a digital art project during the end of term 'Activities Week'. They produced some stunning images, which were sold in aid of charity. We immediately thought of using these for the 2008 calendar, but our home printing could not deliver the quality. Then our print finisher acquired a digital printer which produces super images on high quality gloss

paper at a sensible price - so we can offer a high quality, near professional, calendar for not much more than last year's £3.00 price tag. Once again we hope these will be on sale at the newsagent in Eaton Place and available direct from Geoff Ashton in Church Street.

HOT POT SUPPER

Saturday 3rd November
7.30pm W.I. Hall

Tickets £10 incl. Wine

Ring 831575

For tickets or offers
to host a table

WHAT THE PAPERS SAY

In the third and last of the talks given by BHTA for this winter season, Joyce Allen took us through what the papers were saying in the 1860s; about the world in general, but concentrating on the local area, and Bingham in particular.



The talk was illustrated by some wonderful old photographs and excerpts from old newspaper articles, and Joyce gave credit to Geoff Ashton and Robin Aldworth for their help with the presentation.

Joyce's detailed research, combined with help she has had from people who have come across interesting stories whilst researching their family history, enabled her to give the audience a fascinating insight into life in Bingham at that time. Sue Hodson had found an account of the death of an ancestor who, being quite alone in a field, had suffered an epileptic fit, fallen face down into a ditch and drowned.

Incidentally, it was finding his grave whilst helping with the graveyard survey that had

inspired her to go delving into the newspaper archives. Chris Cockayne has a letter written by an ancestor which was reproduced in a local paper. He with his wife and five children were part of a group of Wesleyan Methodists who were setting up communities in the virgin bush of New Zealand, and the letter tells of their adventures. The letter was on display at the end of the meeting.

Then, as now, the papers seemed to concentrate on the bad news, the sad news; the American Civil war, two Maori wars in New Zealand, the Prussia/Denmark war, the death of Prince Albert and the assassination of Lincoln. But also it was at this time that Darwin's 'Origin of the Species' was published, and Dickens's 'Great Expectations' and 'Our Mutual Friend'. The Nottingham papers were reporting on the crimes that were rife at this time; crimes such as the abandonment of new-born babies, which reflect the social conditions under which people were living. However, new hospitals were being built, and people were becoming aware of the problems of polluted drinking water, and the disposal of sewage. In the 1860s Bingham was progressing. The Wesleyan Day School was completed, the Butter Cross



The steam mill in Station St. was built in 1861. The warehouses behind still stand; the site of the mill is now Old Mill Court.

and the Steam Flour Mill were built. (See photo below, taken c.1900) At this time also, gas light came to Bingham. A local wedding, that of Lady Stanhope to Lord Carnarvon, seems to have been well celebrated by the local population under gas light in the Market Square, but when the Prince of Wales married Princess Alexandra, a Mr Brown illuminated his premises in such a novel way, that some rather officious policemen seemed to think it necessary to move on watching bystanders, and also to charge some of them. It would seem that the police had plenty to do elsewhere, without charging innocent bystanders. There are accounts of poaching, someone letting off a stink bomb in the church, somebody accidentally shooting a servant girl in the foot, somebody setting fire to a barley stack and many more incidents, some tragic, some comic.

Joyce told us of the historical finds from Thor's cave that were reported on at this time, but just as in these days, you shouldn't always believe what you read in the papers. One find discovered in drift clay, a portion of cow's horn, had theoretically been deposited by glacial seas. This theory has since been rejected on the grounds that there were no glacial seas. The piece of horn and other artefacts found in Thor's cave at the same time, are now in Derby, Stoke, and Sheffield museums. But as Joyce reminded us that, as a result of BHTA field walking, only Bingham has a 400,000 year old flint!

(This find was reported in 'Discovering Bingham' No 16, June 2007. Ed.)

THE LAST LAP An Urgent Message from our Chairman



Jenny Brown of Trent & Peak Archaeology Unit discussing field walking methods with Peter Allen at the start of the project in 2004.

Our four-year project finishes in November 2008. Looking at a number of projects like ours on the Internet it is surprising just how many don't make the finishing line; they seem to fizzle out leaving no report and no indication of where one can go to get information about them. This is something we intend to avoid.

We have an obligation to the Heritage Lottery Fund to produce a book that illustrates the *History of Settlement of Bingham*, a report on the project, a display of the finds from field walking and to have permanent storage for the finds that we feel need to be preserved. We also have an obligation, not specifically mentioned in our project proposal, to make our data available to the archaeological community at large. Field walking, however, is only one aspect of the complete project. We still have to complete the analysis of a 'hi-tech', topographical laser scanner survey of Crow Close to find out more about the abandoned Medieval village that is known to have existed there. We also need to complete the research into old

maps to gather more information about how the pattern of settlement of Bingham has changed throughout its history. There is still scope for interested people, who have not yet contacted us, to take part in this. If you are one of those phone Geoff Ashton on 875177.



The 1842 Parish Tithe & 1776 Chesterfield Estate records, held in the County Archives, that we have been able to refer to for our map research.

Our top priority at the start of this final season is to finish the field walking and identify the last of the finds. There are 145 hectares still to do and not much time to do it. If we have a warm autumn the wheat could be too dense for us to see the soil by mid November. Effectively this gives us two months, which isn't enough time without a special effort. If field walkers who normally only come out once a week can make it twice and others put in an extra session when they are able, we might just do it. If there is anyone out there who hasn't field-walked yet, but would like to have a go then give Peter Allen a ring on 831575. The more people we can get on the ground, in the short time we have, the better. This is probably the last chance you will have to do anything like it!

WHAT TO DO WITH 50,000 BITS OF POTTERY, ET CETERA?



Joan Ashton in the Finds Store

To date the field-walking project has yielded nearly 40,000 finds but we could end up with around 50,000. Once we have identified and entered them in the database, many can be disposed of but most people agree that anything medieval and older should be kept for future reference. One of the guiding principles in BHTA is that anything we do should be made available to all the people of Bingham and one of the ways to present the findings would be as a museum display sited somewhere accessible to the public in Bingham. There are three tasks to complete this final stage of the project.

Firstly, we have to find a place to put a permanent museum display of the archaeology and history of Bingham. Such a place would have to be open to the public most days of the week and staffed. Bingham Library has kindly allowed us to put up a small temporary display in the Library for several months after the project ends. Indeed, the Library would be the best place for a permanent display, but space is limited in the current building. An alternative might be a new community hall, if one were ever built. We are looking for ideas for venues and also for volunteers who could help in

designing and setting up both the temporary and permanent museum displays. Is any one interested?

Next, we need a place to store the finds that would not be used in the display, but which ought to be kept as a future research resource. We have had discussions with Nottingham Museum but we are open to other suggestions. We could keep back some pieces to use as teaching sets for the local schools, if they want them, but many will have to go into store.



There are thousands more where these come from !

Lastly, what do we do with the bits that are not worth keeping? There are thousands of these. They include large amounts of colourful bits of 19th and 20th century china, clay pipe stems and coloured glass. These could be used to make a mosaic design with

some historical relevance to Bingham as a permanent display in the Market Place, Eaton Place or as a decorative wall in any new community building. This might be done as a creative project, possibly overseen by the art department of a local school, college or university. BHTA would support it and raise the money for it, but we don't have the skills actually to do it. Please give it some thought and if your imagination is fired by this idea, you might be the person, or group, we are looking for.

A SPY IN THE CAMP ?

The grave slab of the Rev Samuel Brunsell, rector of Bingham from 1648 to 1688, can now only be seen by lifting a heavy 'trapdoor' in the nave staging of our parish church (*for details go to the BHTA website- Churchyard Survey*).

Little was known about him other than the fact that he came into money soon after the

Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 following the Civil War and the Commonwealth.

Newly published research by Dr C. Davies of Oxford University now suggests that far from simply being a well-off country parson, his wealth was probably a reward for a far



The Brunsell Arms

more adventurous early career. During most of the Civil War he had lived in the Netherlands where he was closely involved with members of the exiled royal family. After his arrival in Bingham in 1648 he was probably acting as an undercover agent for the Royalists during Cromwell's Commonwealth.

Bingham's living was a rich one, usually in the patronage of the Stanhope family, Earls of Chesterfield and lords of Bingham manor. Dr Brunsell was given the rectorship by Katherine, Lady Stanhope, whom he served in the Netherlands for six years. Whilst there, Lady Stanhope was involved in frantic attempts to raise money and troops for a Royalist attempt to overthrow Cromwell during the 'Second Civil War' in 1648, and it seems highly likely that Brunsell's return to England in that year was involved with this. He had probably met the future Charles II in Holland and on the king's restoration in 1660 he preached and published a sermon at Newark extolling the virtues of his new sovereign.

Intrigue seems to have run in the family; Samuel's elder brother Dr Henry Brunsell was also actively involved in plotting for both Charles I and Charles II, being heavily rewarded in 1660 with clerical livings by the Bishop of Ely and marrying his niece. The Bishop was Matthew Wren, who had himself been a (largely absentee) rector of Bingham from 1624 to 1634. As a result of his marriage Dr Henry became brother-in-law to Sir Christopher Wren - the famous architect of St Paul's Cathedral. This story is a timely reminder that local historians shouldn't be too parochial in their researches, as it is very easy to miss the 'bigger picture'!

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