

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

QUICK CHANGE AT OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING!



When BHTA members turned up at the Court House, in the pouring rain, the only person who didn't turn up was the caretaker to open up the Council Chamber which had been booked weeks earlier and confirmed two days before 26th June. When frantic 'phone calls produced no solution, Geoff and Joan Ashton, who fortunately for us live opposite, gallantly offered to throw open their house to allow the meeting to continue. The official business and the Chairman's illustrated presentation were held in the lounge and our displays and refreshments were accommodated in the dining room and kitchen. A warm vote of thanks was passed thanking Geoff and Joan for saving the day. The picture shows 22 out of the 30 members attending the AGM. As things turned out it was fortunate that 18 other members sent their apologies!

[Ed. - By the way, Geoff and Joan's lounge is not V-shaped; this is the result of pasting two photos together to include as many people as possible]

LOOK BACK ON 2007

The formal part of the AGM took only a few minutes because there were no motions or elections as all the current committee had volunteered to stand for re-election. The Treasurer reported a healthy balance in our own account, but admitted to a possible overspend on the *History of Settlement in Bingham* project. Heritage Lottery Fund agreed a request for an extension to March 2009, but would not help us out with additional funding. We are making plans to deal with it ourselves. That bit over, the chairman gave a

PowerPoint presentation to illustrate some of the highlights of the past year.

2007 was the year we finished field walking and began interpreting the results. Getting to that point took 74 weeks of field walking over 868 hectares of arable farmland. Over 54,000 finds were collected and catalogued. All this has been done by 118 volunteers and consultants, of whom 29 of the volunteers joined the project in the first year and are still with us. The first stage of the interpretation is to write descriptions of each of the 97 fields. Helpers have been drafted in to prepare

maps, charts and diagrams in a standard template for each field before Geoff and Peter add the interpreted detail. Some highlights of the discoveries made so far were illustrated.

A map of all the dated flints in the parish shows several sites where there may have been Mesolithic hunter-gatherer camps around the prehistoric lake north of the railway line. In the south western corner of the parish are sites where the first farmers settled in the Early Neolithic. It is even possible to chart the migration of settlements from there around the parish over the next 2000 years.

Crop marks on Parson's Hill are thought to show the site of an Iron Age settlement. We found enough Iron Age pottery sherds there to show that this interpretation is probably right. Surprisingly they were all in the western part of the settlement. In the eastern half there were no Iron Age sherds, but several Roman ones, which seems to be saying that the original settlement in the west migrated east in the first centuries AD. One particularly rewarding pattern is the close clustering of early/middle Saxon sherds around three sites known to have been occupied first by Iron Age people and then the Romano-British. This must tell an interesting story. Equally interesting is the fact that the known Roman sites all have a lot of pig bones associated with them.

The last slide about field walking showed the distribution of 18th century pottery, which seems to be concentrated in a block of four fields on Holme Farm. It has been suggested this is the site of the 18th century village dump.

The geophysical survey of Crow Close was done in April this year and came up with the unexpected discovery of the site of a WWII searchlight unit. Interpretation of what the survey tells about the site's medieval history is awaited. Progress with the research into the old maps was reported (*see Open Field item*). This and the earlier research into the hedgerows of Bingham have been proving useful in understanding the field walking finds. To round off the presentation, there were slides showing the vigorous and entertaining social side of BHTA's activities.



OPEN FIELD STRIP FARMING

Our work on the 1776 and 1841 records of the parish indicates that, apart from a reduced number of hedges, the layout of fields has changed little over more than two centuries. However this plan only dates back to the time - probably in c.1680-90 - when the ancient communal system of strip farming in open fields was abandoned and the land 'enclosed' into privately farmed hedged plots. The photograph of the open field diorama in Nottingham Castle Museum gives an idea of what the farmland here would have looked like prior to enclosure.

This system was still in operation in 1586 when it was described in a manorial survey book written in Latin (now held by the County Archives) drawn up for the Lord of the Manor, Sir Brian Stapleton, prior to the sale of his Bingham estate. At this period four arable fields were in operation called Chapel or North Field, South Field, Stamhill or East Field, and Brackendale or West Field. These were subdivided into over 100 'furlongs', in turn subdivided into over 4000 arable strips. Unfortunately the survey possesses no accompanying map, which may have been lost somewhere in the mists of time. So, being gluttons for punishment, BHTA included in

their current project an attempt to reconstruct the 1586 map from the written descriptions.

This has involved translating the original text, analysing and interpreting the information on the strips by a team of 10 volunteers, each of whom had to learn to read Tudor handwriting and transcribe the names and areas onto Excel spreadsheets. The record also lists 66 named Freeholders, Tenant Farmers and Cottagers as well as the Rector and the Lord of the Manor, describing the location of their homesteads, property and land. In most cases the area of each plot is given and these vary in size from 0.04 to 47 acres. Another vital piece of information, if we are to reconstruct the map, is the location data given for some 80% of the plots which usually - but not always - provide the names of the field/road or the tenant/owner to the north, south, east and west. All the



Robin, Geoff & Adrian playing Happy Families

available data has also been put onto a 'homestead' database.

Useful as these computer-based data systems are, when it comes to placing the plots onto a map the information has been transferred onto cards. Each carries the general information of the occupant's name, the area and any description of the property in a central panel with the location data on the 'N,S,E & W' edges of the card. These have become known as the 'Happy Families' pack and, in spite of the tiresome gaps, we are slowly piecing together the jig-saw puzzle. Some things are known, for example: 'Husband Street' is now called Long Acre and we can make an informed guess as to where Chappell [sic] Lane or West & East Moor Lanes might have been. At least some of the field names recorded in 1586 appear in the records from 1776 and 1841 and a few remain today. With the exception of the 'Fosse', road names do not seem to have survived the years. Hopefully our work on the open field map will help to find the likely locations for Deadman's, Goodwyn, Guye, Market, Selby and Spybie Lanes, not to mention where the Pur and Selby Crosses once stood. Meanwhile, we continue to play 'Happy Families'!



MORE FROM YOUR FAMILY PHOTO ALBUMS

Since our last newsletter we have been contacted by several current and ex-residents of Bingham offering BHTA the chance to look through their family albums of 'snaps' to see if they had anything of interest. So far there has always been something that was worth scanning into our picture library. Three of these albums turned out to all contain different shots taken in 1935 of the celebrations marking the Silver Jubilee of George V. Taken together they provide a vivid record of the townfolk coming together to commemorate a national event with a thanksgiving service around the Butter Cross, the children's fancy dress parade and country dancing plus a procession of elaborately decorated floats.

It is also possible to identify many of the adults in the pictures and some of the children are still living here in Bingham. As sometimes happen with these 'snaps' taken on a known date allow us to identify other pictures already in our collection for which we did not have this information. An example of this is the Methodist Church, 'The Sun Never Sets...' float (see below) which we had from another collection but the owner had forgotten the occasion. We can now be sure that this float was part of the Jubilee festivities. Our collection now contains photographs of several 'Royal' celebrations, from Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897 to the 1935 Jubilee but, so far, we have not seen any pictorial evidence of the town celebrating George VI's Coronation, two years later.

HOT POT SUPPER

Saturday 8th November

7.30pm W. I. Hall

Tickets £10 incl. Wine

Ring 831575

For tickets or offers
to host a table





Does anyone remember if this was celebrated here? If so, no one we have asked up to now can remember this event.

We are not just interested in collecting pictures of special events - portraits of people, shots of townsfolk just going about their everyday lives or buildings can all provide a fascinating insight into the social history of the town. Quite recently when going through the family album of the Hutchinson family, we found that it also included studio portraits of their servants and what we believe is the only known portrait (*shown above*) of the Rev Robert Miles' wife, Mary. So, please search out those family albums and let us know - you never know what we may find!

A MOST SHOCKING AFFAIR

The following reports appeared in the Creswell's Nottingham Journal during 1777

August 30th

Last Saturday a most shocking affair happened in Bingham, one Ann Seacy, who for some time (At Intervals) had been in a state of Insanity, in a doubtful and despairing way, and who has a husband and several small children, took the opportunity of his absence, to murder the youngest, an infant about seven weeks old, by strangling it (as it is supposed by the marks that appeared on its neck and the blood that gushed from its nose). She had just a few moments before given suck. She was first perceived by her daughter a girl about fourteen years of age, who going into the room, screamed out, upon which the mother immediately ran and locked the outer door, by that means the girl was prevented from calling assistance, but her shrieks and cries being heard by the neighbours they instantly forced the door when to their great surprise, they found the infant dead as aforementioned. Just at the instant they entered the room, she had got another child by the neck, which she was attempting to strangle in the same manner. By the timely

interposition of the neighbours, she was prevented from perpetrating her horrid design. She said (but this is shocking to relate) had she murdered the other it would have given her great ease, dedaring at the same time her intention was to murder herself afterwards. She had several times before made an attempt on her own life, but was always prevented. On Monday, the Coroner's inquest on the body was held.

Verdict. Manslaughter

September 10th

Ann Seacy of Bingham, who was lately committed to our County Goal for the murder of her youngest child at that place, was released from her confinement, the commitment having been withdrawn.

October 18th

Friday last, died at Harby, Ann Seacy who lately murdered her child in Bingham. She could never be prevailed upon to take sustenance enough to support nature, since her committing the horrid deed.

DON'T FORGET YOUR 2009 BHTA CALENDAR

The theme this year is a celebration of 100 years in photographs of Bingham Market Place.

On sale at the newsagents in Eaton Place or direct from Geoff Ashton.

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