

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 BATTLE OF THE SOMME ANNIVERSARY

On 21st July BHTA joined forces with the Bingham Library in presenting the Imperial War Museum film of the first month of the Battle of the Somme which was fought 100 years ago. We were invited to show a display of our project on Bingham and World War 1 and to present a short talk before Tim Warner, of the new Inspire Culture organisation that now runs the Library Service, showed the film. About 50 people attended the two showings, one of which is pictured on page 2.



'Discovering Bingham' has always reported on the activities and projects carried out by the Association and in the majority of cases these have been initiated by BHTA. We have always welcomed the involvement of other local organisations but invariably the initial spark has come from us. We are often approached by adult and youth groups to provide a speaker at their meetings or lead a party of their members on Town Walks. However, over the last three months we have had the new, and welcomed, experience of being asked by two organisations to work with them on their own project. The first was Bingham Parish Church of St Mary and all Saints, who wanted to mark the 90th birthday of Her Majesty the Queen with an exhibition of pictures of the Town and the Church over the ten decades from 1926 to 2016 and asked if our extensive photo archive could be used as the basis for the display? This we were more than happy to do and, as the above photo shows, together we provided an eight metres run of over 100 captioned pictures. For each decade there was a selection of 'Royal' and 'Bingham' photos as a free public exhibition in the north transept which opened on the day of the Town Summer Fair in time for the Celebration Service on Sunday 12th June and remained open for the next ten days.

The second approach was from the Bingham Library Service 'Inspire' to work with them on the anniversary of the Battle of the Somme which is described here in our opening article.

The film lasted 76 minutes and was silent, of course, but had a modern musical soundtrack overlain. It covered the first few weeks of the battle, which began on July 1st 1916, and it was shown in UK cinemas during August 1916. Over 20 million people watched it. It vividly portrayed the various aspects of war, but was, as was to be expected, very much a piece of propaganda. Cheerful soldiers were filmed marching off to the front smiling, smoking cigarettes and pipes and waving their helmets at the camera. Scenes of men in the trenches and then "going over the top" were quite vivid.

The changing nature of the world at this time was emphasised by shots in one



scene of horses pulling carts and gun carriages, followed by "vintage" lorries and motor cycles in the next. Both Cavalry and Artillery figured heavily in the battle (see below) and there were some impressive shots of artillery including the huge 8" Guns pulled by a massive steam engine. The sound track of guns firing in sync with the gun-smoke was impressive! To our modern eyes, firing a big gun by pulling on a bit of string looked a bit primitive!

The film was not totally bland and did show some of the realities in terms of dead bodies, mainly of Germans and horses. The shots of the blowing up of mining galleries the Royal Engineers dug under the German lines were impressive. Scenes showing the treatment of casualties and long lines of German prisoners were prominent. Towards the end of the film

one shot showed yet more British troops smiling and laughing on their way to they knew not what in the trenches followed by scenes of prisoners of war being loaded onto trains to finish their war in PoW camps. The commentary text frame suggested these were less fortunate than the 'Happy Tommies' heading off in the other direction.

Our audience rather felt they were anything but less fortunate. The 1916 audience could have been forgiven for concluding that we had just about won the war already and all would be over soon. Nothing could have been further from the truth.

RESEARCH REWARDS

As usual, the official business at our Annual General Meeting is done and dusted in well under ten minutes so that plenty of time is left, before the refreshments, to bring our members up-to-date on recent developments with our current research projects. This year, on 30th June in the W.I. Hall, there were four presentations. The first was given by Peter Allen on the latest series of test pits we are digging which it is hoped will supplement the

information we gained on the archaeology of the Town from our main Pits Project. To end-up the session Robin Aldworth gave a brief demonstration of the Photo Archive Database we have been working on over the past five years.

Joyce Allen and Joan Ashton provided the filling for the sandwich with their presentations of just some of the fascinating facts they have gleaned from their thorough research into just two aspects of our investigation of World War One and the inhabitants of Bingham.

The following is a summary of their finding:

THE SURVIVORS



This is probably the most poignant and rewarding piece of research we have done, looking at the men and women of Bingham who survived the war and to see what happened to them after the hostilities. We were able to search a variety of records, and began with Bingham's [Roll of Honour](#) and the [Absent Voter's List](#). In many cases they gave us the soldiers' names, addresses, rank, regiment and regimental number, which would lead us, to the [Army Service Records](#). Many of these were destroyed in the second world war, but [Medal Cards](#) survived, which, as in the case of Gunner



William Dykes Strong of the Royal Garrison Artillery, tells us he arrived in France in August 1915 and was discharged in February 1919. He was a gun layer, which meant he measured and sighted the heavy guns and was paid an extra 6d a day. He received (as shown below) the Victory, British and Fifteen Star medals, the latter, awarded to those who served in 1915.



Sometimes we found a soldier's [service papers](#). Walter Starbuck of the Grenadier Guards paper's give details of his age 19yrs and 4mths, his address as The Gas Works (his father was manager of the gas works) and his profession as Draper. We also have details of his promotion to Sergeant and his times on leave. In others we find details of field punishments. Frederick James Widdowson, a blacksmith before the war enlisted as a shoeing smith. His records show him to be 'Honest, Reliable and Sober' but he was given Field Punishment 2 for being absent from his billet after 9-30pm. This was considered a serious offence when on active service. He was placed in fetters and handcuffs in full kit for a couple of hours a day and subjected to hard labour for the rest of the day and loss of pay. His punishment lasted two days. In more serious cases the offender's sentence could last for a couple of

weeks and possibly he would be tied to a post and often placed facing enemy fire, though out of range! On discharge Widdowson was cited as being a 'Pivotal Man', which meant he was regarded as being someone with skills that could help to rebuild British Industry. He became an AA patrol man!

Another Pivotal Man was Lieutenant John Beetham Shaw, Beetham Close is named after him. He became the Principal Architect for the North Midlands Housing Department for local government and was awarded the OBE.

We also used [Censuses](#), [Electoral Roll](#), the [1939 Identity Card register](#) and in some cases [Family Trees](#). One of these on Ancestry is how we found Margaret Hilda Beatrice Stone, a member of the Voluntary Aid Detachment (soon known as VADs) who emigrated to New Zealand after the war and lived in the beautiful Bay of Plenty. We need to do more research to find her war service, but this is the fascination of doing this kind of research, there are so many stories to learn about the men and women of Bingham who left their quiet market town to face the horrors of war.

[WHEN THE 'BLOODY WAR' WAS OVER](#)

Some of what went on in the town is given in these extracts from the Grantham Journal covering the Inter - War Years.

[August 18th 1928](#) **[Overcrowded buses.](#)**

A warning that in future penalties for "bus overcrowding" will be more severe was issued by the Bingham Magistrates on



Thursday, when they heard three cases arising out of the August Bank Holiday rush. The three conductors, John Curtis and James Brown of Nottingham and Harry King of Long Clawson were all fined. The Bench regarded the case of Curtis very seriously. His bus which was built for 52 passengers contained 54 adults and 20 children. Brown's bus carried 56 adults and 6 children instead of the regulation 31, and in the case of King the vehicle contained 31 instead of 20.

[June 26th 1926 - Advert Auction.](#)

To close a Trust, Mr Terrey Pyatt, FAI will sell by auction on Thursday July 8th the spacious and well lighted manufacturing works and Public Garage, and approximately 4.5 acres of building land on the Nottingham Road, now in the occupation of Messrs T Walker and Son. This well planned workshop covers an area of approximately 1,330 sq yards and contains Joiner's and Machine Shop, Erection Shop, Paint Shop and Black Smiths Shop with 8 forges and the usual offices. There are 2 Timber Drying sheds at the rear.

Also the separate erected Garage of corrugated Iron on brick foundation, Bulk Storage and Petrol Pump.

The site contains an area of 4.5 acres and is situated in an elevated (?) position, and has

a frontage of 124 yards to the Main Road from Nottingham to Grantham and is eminently suitable for building purposes. (3 houses were built on the land of which two no longer exist because they, the garage and the manufacturing works were dismantled to provide the site for the Aldi Supermarket).

October 7th 1922

Prosecution for Railway Trespass at Bingham.

At Bingham Police court on Thursday, three men, Fred Hitchcock, bootmaker, Arthur Martin, baker, and Eric Cooper, fitter's apprentice were summoned for trespass on the Great Northern Railway on August 9th.

The evidence of the prosecution was to the effect that the defendants were seen by one of the Railway company's porters to open a gate leading from the cricket-field and across the metals. When called to by John Edward Hemmings, a porter, the men took no notice, and crossed the line.

"This is simply a test case", said Hitchcock, "and hundreds of people are eagerly awaiting the decision today." For the past 38 years, the defendant said, he had lived in the village, and had always used the level-crossing footpath. There had been several station-masters during that time, and he had never been warned not to cross the

metals at that point.

"I contend that it has always been a public right of way" added the defendant, who said that the footpath led to three village roads, and also to the cricket

field and tennis courts. He maintained if it were a private footpath people should not have been allowed to use it. He claimed that if a crossing were used for 20 years it became a public footpath.

Frank Radford, aged 82, who was called as a witness for the defence, said that the footpath had been used by the public all his life, and he had never heard of anyone being warned not to use it.

Major-General Sir Le Marchant, the presiding magistrate, said there was no question as to the public being deprived of the right of crossing the line. It was a question as to whether they should cross by the level crossing, which was closed by Act of Parliament in 1889, or whether they should cross by the bridge, which as a matter of fact, was only a few yards away from the level crossing, and which had been provided for the convenience and protection of the public. He was well satisfied that the



In spite of torrential rain at the start, we finally installed our display of current research at the Summer Fair.

prosecution was established, and the Bench felt that all the Railway Company wished to bring to the notice of the public, once and for all, was that they should not use the level crossing, but the bridge which had been provided for the purpose. Each defendant was ordered to pay 5s.

At the same hearing, John William Kirk, of Bingham, was ordered to pay a fine of 20s for trespassing on the line, instead of using the footbridge, the prosecuting solicitor said that it was a very dangerous practice, as people might easily be killed by the express train which dashed through the station at 60 mph. Major-General Sir Le Marchant said "60 mph?" The solicitor said "I have been told that". The chairman replied "I have never been on one that did it yet".

[Note: The original crossing to Butts field was a few yards East of the platform before the bridge was built after a child was killed crossing the line.]

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Thanks to **Hammond Property Services** for their support by printing this issue of *Discovering Bingham*

QUIZ NIGHT & PIE SUPPER

**Saturday 26th November
7.30pm. W.I. Hall**

Tickets £15 each

The price will include a bottle of red and white wine on each table for eight to ten people. For details of menu choice and to book tickets by

3rd November ring:

Pam Richmond 01949 837557