

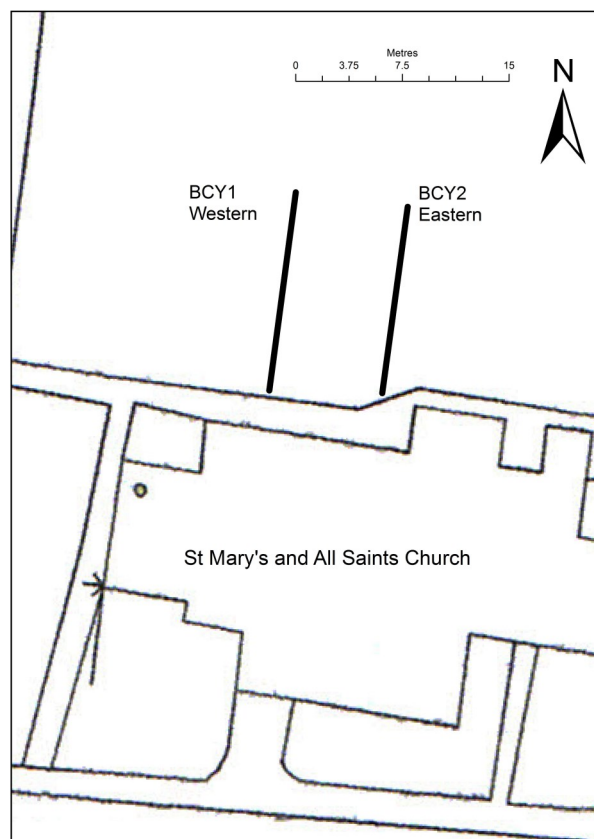
# ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS IN

## BINGHAM PARISH CHURCHYARD

It is highly unusual to be allowed to do any archaeology in a churchyard. In the summer of 2015 a memorial garden was established on the north side of Bingham parish church. In preparation, two trenches were dug in which to plant a yew hedge to define the garden. They were orientated roughly north-south and were 8 metres apart. The church authorities allowed BHTA to sieve the soil that had been turned over in digging out the trenches. The western trench was sieved on 11-12<sup>th</sup> August 2015, while the eastern one was sieved on 25-27<sup>th</sup> August.

### LOCATION AND PROTOCOL FOR THE INVESTIGATION

<b>Site code</b>	Two trenches: BCY1 and BCY2
<b>NGR</b> (Mid point between the two trenches)	407737. 339970
<b>Height OD</b>	23m OD
<b>Address</b>	Bingham Parish Church
<b>Dig dates</b>	11th-12th (BCY1) and 25th-27th August 2016 (BCY2)
<b>Location of site</b>	North side of the church, now a yew hedge marking the boundary to a memorial garden
<b>Protocol</b>	Sieved soil turned over during digging trenches for the hedge planting.



*During 2005-2006 BHTA carried out a study of the natural history and the information on the headstones in Bingham parish churchyard. For full details on this go to [churchyard](http://www.binghamparishchurch.org.uk/churchyard): There is also a history of the church to be found on:*

[www.binghamparishchurch.org.uk/StMarys/StMary.html](http://www.binghamparishchurch.org.uk/StMarys/StMary.html)

*Bingham parish church showing the location of the two trenches on the north side.*

## SETTING

The church is built on the Hollygate Sandstone of Triassic age. This is a medium grained water-bearing sandstone and was the main source of water for Bingham throughout most of its history. The ground in the churchyard falls away to the north. The low ground in the northern half of the churchyard is underlain by clays deposited in a lake that formed at the end of the last ice age (about 20,00 years ago). This area would have remained boggy possibly up to medieval times.

## METHODOLOGY



*The north side of Bingham parish church. The trenches are in front of the tower*

Each trench was between 13 and 14 metres long and 50 cm wide. The depth varied from 16 to 30 cm, but was mostly around 20 cm. Throughout, the trench bottomed on a deposit of glacial clay. The trenches were divided into 1-metre lengths, each of which was sieved as a unit. No attempt was made to dig in spits because of the turnover during digging out the trenches. Fragments of sandstone, brick, metal objects, mortar, slate, building stone and coal were retrieved in the sieving, but were not kept. All bone fragments, presumed to be human, were returned to the pit. Only the pottery

was taken away for detailed examination.

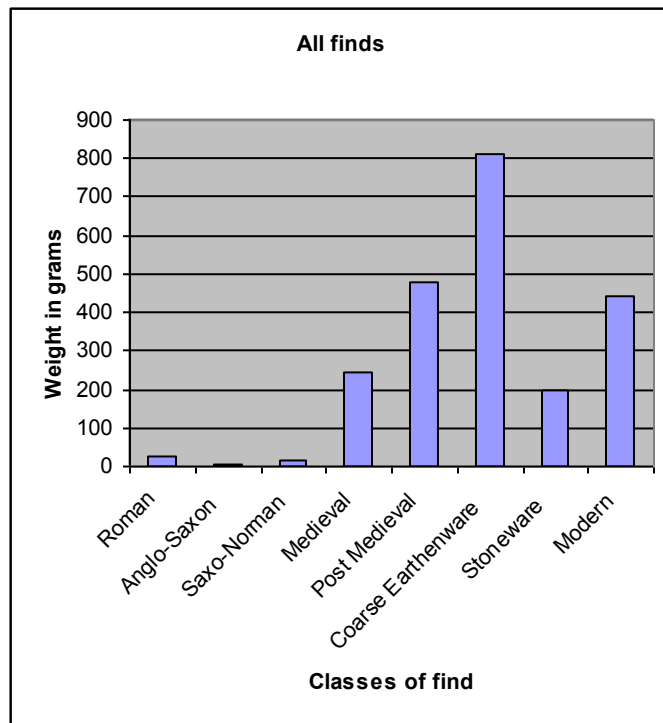
The finds were recorded using the convention BCY 2/7, where BCY equals Bingham Churchyard, 2 is the eastern trench (1 the western trench) and 7 is the one metre length numbered from the church going northwards. The finds were washed then recorded in the Access database where they were given a unique number. Jane Young identified medieval and older pottery. The younger finds were identified mostly by Peter Allen and Adrian Henstock (stoneware) with help from Jane Young.

In the analysis of the data no dis-



*The western trench. The first metre strip has been done and the sieved soil replaced. Work is now in hand on the second metre strip.*





inction is made between the western and eastern trenches.

## FINDS

Pottery ranging from Roman to Modern was recovered from the trenches. The churchyard fell out of use in 1888 when the cemetery on The Banks was opened and among the Modern pottery few sherds were found that could be attributed to the 20<sup>th</sup> C.

In terms of weight the most abundant pottery was Coarse Earthenware, which spans the post-medieval and Modern periods. Salt-glazed stoneware also spans the two periods. Thus the post-medieval period as a whole produced the most pottery.

## Roman

Six sherds were recovered including Grey Ware, Cream Ware, Coarse Sandy Ware and Samian ware. There was no sign of erosion on any sherd. The pieces were all small and none could be dated within the Roman period.

## Anglo-Saxon

The single Anglo-Saxon sherd is Central Lincolnshire Early to Middle sandstone tempered. The sherd is black from a small jar and has carbonised vegetable matter on the inner surface.



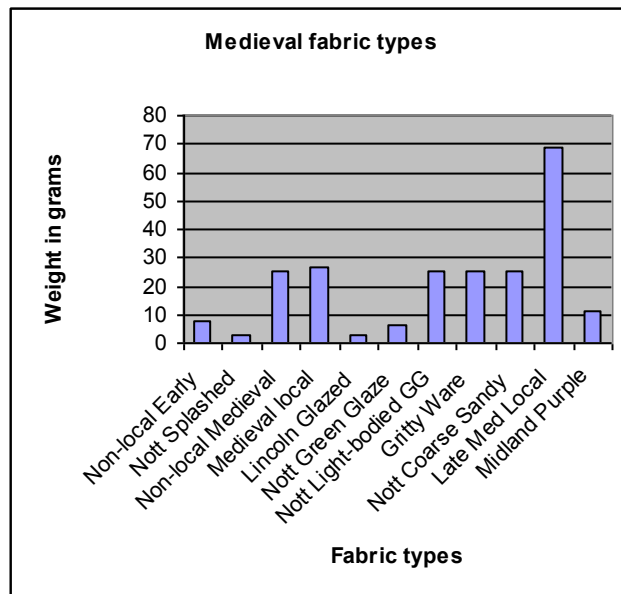
*Medieval sherds: Top left, Nottingham Coarse Sandy Ware; bottom left, Medieval Local Fabrics; top centre, Northern Gritty Ware Variant; Bottom centre, Nottingham Light-bodied Green Glaze; top right, Late Medieval Local Fabrics; bottom right, Non-local Medieval Fabrics.*

## Saxo-Norman

Six finds were collected, four from the western pit, two from the eastern one. Two Stamford Ware fabric A finds were from jars made before 1100 and are essentially Late Saxo-Norman. Two of the remainder were Lincolnshire Fine Shelled Ware, which ranges 1000 to 1200 and two Non-local Saxo-Norman Fabrics, one shell tempered and the other coarse sand tempered. They also straddle 1066 and range into the 12th century.

## Medieval

30 identifiable sherds of medieval pottery were collected. All except 4 of them have a



date range that starts in the late 12th or early 13th centuries. All except three of these span the whole of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, during when it is believed that building work was being carried out on the church.

The range of fabrics is quite broad, but unusual in their proportions.

There is a single sherd of Nottingham Splashed Ware (1180-1230). Two others have a splashed glaze, but are classed as Non-local Early Medieval Fabrics. They are earlier with a range that falls within 1130-1230.

One unusual sherd, at least in Bingham, is of Lincoln Glazed Ware, a 13<sup>th</sup> C fabric type. Along with Nottingham Coarse Sandy Ware, Nottingham Gritty Ware, Nottingham Green Glazed Variant and four sherds of Nottingham Light-bodied Green Glaze these are essentially 13<sup>th</sup> C and do not extend beyond the Black Death (1348-49).

Most of the rest are Medieval Local Fabrics (7) and Non-local Medieval Fabrics (6). While some of these begin in the 12<sup>th</sup> C, they are essentially 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> C types, some with a long date range.

There was a single glazed roof tile with a range 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> C.

Among the late fabrics there is one Midland Purple Ware sherd (1400-1699) and three Late Medieval Local Fabrics. These are also mainly late 14<sup>th</sup> or early 15<sup>th</sup> C to end 16<sup>th</sup> C.

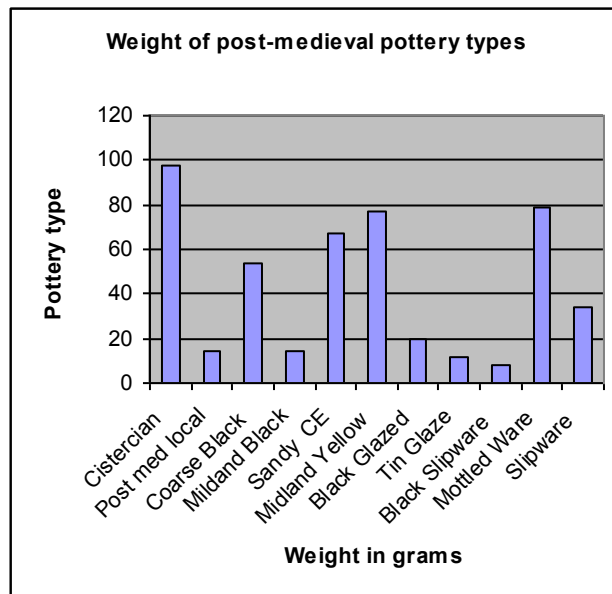
## Post medieval

Eleven varieties of post-medieval pottery types were found and they range through the post-medieval period. Date ranges for these fabric types are still being researched, but approximate ranges were given in the section on field walking on the [BHTA website](#).

These are:

Type	Date range	Weight in grams
Cistercian Ware	1450-1550	98
Post medieval local ware	1450-1600	14
Coarse Black Ware	1550-1800	54
Midland Black Ware	1550-1650	14
Sandy Coarse Earthenware	1550-1640	67
Midland Yellow Ware	1575-1700	77
Black Glazed Ware	1600-1800	20
Tin Glaze	1600-1800	12
Black Slipware	1650-1800	8
Mottled Ware	1675-1750	79
Slipware	1675-1750	34
Nottingham Salt-glaze Stoneware	1690-1790	198

After the Nottingham Salt-glaze Stoneware Cistercian Ware is the most abundant type



found. It mainly has a purple body, with a few red or red-purple. The pitted dark brown glaze is typical of the ware type. Jars, jugs, cups and bottles were all recognised. Midland Black Ware with a shiny black glaze, often on both sides, and the later Black Glazed Ware are relatively minor and are usually regarded as technologically improved derivatives of Cistercian Ware. Coarse Black Ware was mostly red bodied and the forms chamber pot, bottle and bowl were recognised. This is a difficult fabric to date. Some pieces resemble Cistercian Ware; others resemble the Midland Black Ware. It is discussed in depth in the section on field walking, but is generally thought to



*Post-medieval sherds. Top left, Cistercian Ware; Bottom left, Mottled Ware; top centre, Tin Glaze; bottom centre, Midland Yellow Ware; top right, Staffordshire Slipware; bottom right, Slip-trailed Ware.*

be the coarse earthenware equivalent of the fine wares that ceramicists call Cistercian Ware and Midland Black Ware.

Sandy Coarse Earthenware is a late derivative of Midland Purple and very distinctive. The sand content in a red-brown body is fairly low and the sherds may have a partial brown glaze. The only forms recognised are a jar and a pan-

cheon.

Midland Yellow Ware occurred in thick pieces most likely from coarse wares. The body is chalky white; the glaze on the inside only is yellow or has red-orange blotches on yellow. It is a useful ware type to find because it was made in Ticknall, spans the late 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries and production came to an end when the red and pink-bodied coarse earthenware was introduced.

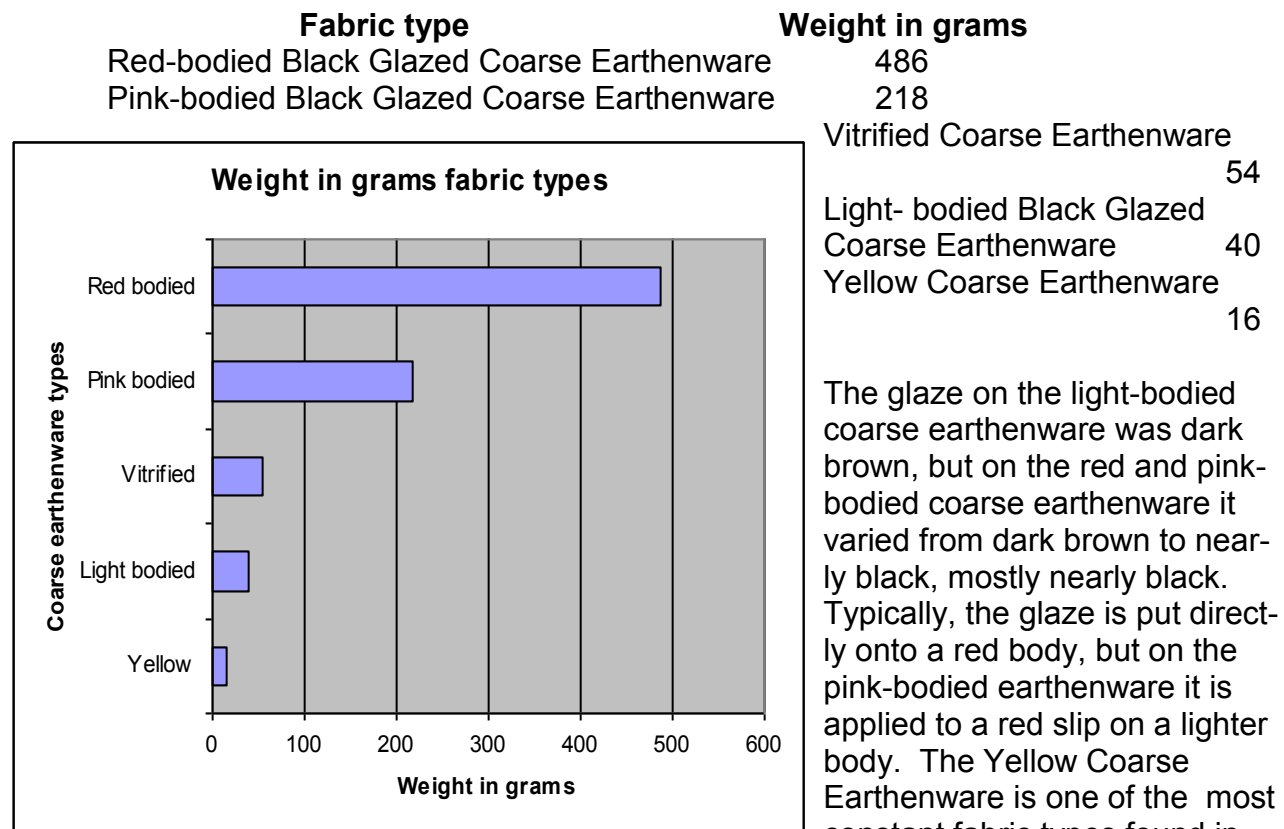
Mottled Ware provided the most numerous sherds being present in relatively small pieces. They seem to be mostly from cups, mugs and bowls. Slipware, which is a contempo-

rary, includes Slip-trailed Ware, Staffordshire Slipware and Black Slipware. The slipware is glazed only on the inside and forms small dishes. Only one sherd is combed.

The remaining ware types, Tin Glaze Ware and Post-medieval Local Fabrics, are relatively minor.

## Coarse Earthenware

79 sherds of coarse earthenware were found. Most were fragments of large jars and pancheons. They include all the fabric types that are typical within Bingham, though the proportions were different from the field walking collection. They are:



The glaze on the light-bodied coarse earthenware was dark brown, but on the red and pink-bodied coarse earthenware it varied from dark brown to nearly black, mostly nearly black. Typically, the glaze is put directly onto a red body, but on the pink-bodied earthenware it is applied to a red slip on a lighter body. The Yellow Coarse Earthenware is one of the most constant fabric types found in

Bingham. The yellow finish is made by applying a clear glaze to a white slip on a pink body. A few of the sherds were rims and could be identified as pancheons. Some were upright vessels, but most were body parts and not easily attributable to a form.

The age range for coarse earthenware, which has been little studied, is late 17<sup>th</sup> C to mid 20<sup>th</sup> C, spanning the post-medieval and modern categories. Evidence from elsewhere is Bingham suggests that the pink-bodied and vitrified varieties are likely to be largely 18<sup>th</sup> C, while the red bodied variety spreads into the 20<sup>th</sup> C. Little is known about the date range of the light-bodied and yellow coarse earthenware.

## Stoneware

This also spans the post-medieval to modern date range categories. While the date range for most of the stoneware sherds spans the 18<sup>th</sup> C, the majority of the finds collected were made in Nottingham and date from 1740-1780. Two with an orange body fabric could be from the first quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> C, while another two are typically late Victorian and made in Derbyshire. The forms are jars, jugs, mugs, bowls, cups, a large bottle, a stew pot and an ink bottle.

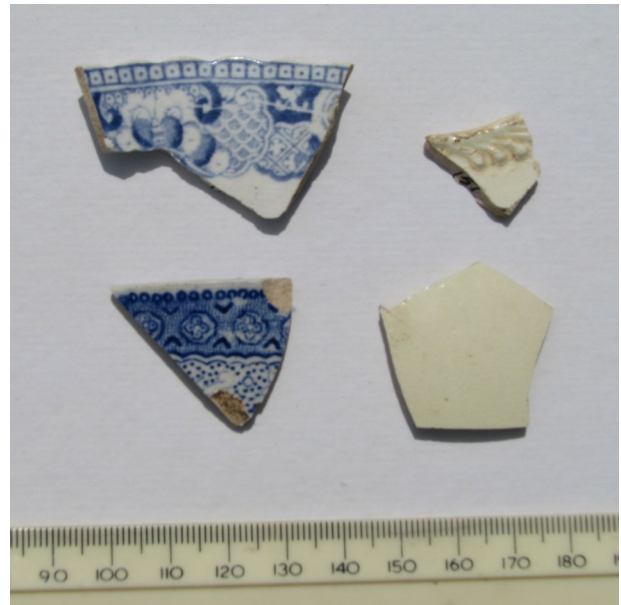


## Modern

A diverse collection of modern pottery was found, but the three most abundant categories

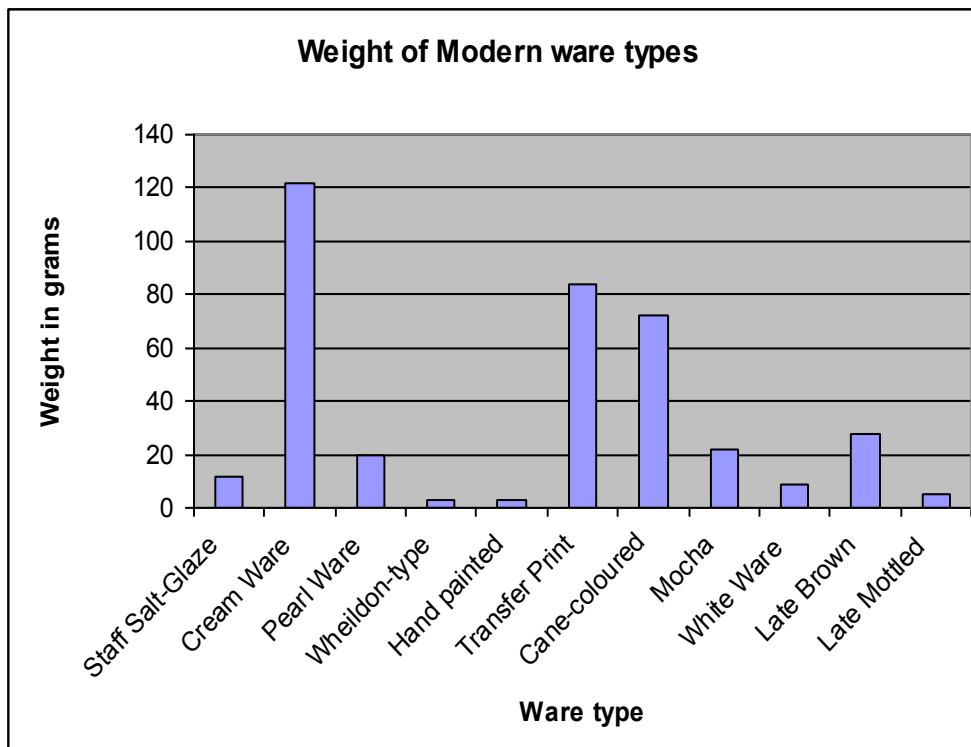


*Mocha Ware sherds*



*On the left are two sherds of blue and white Transfer Printed Ware; on the right are two sherds of Cream Ware.*

are Cream Ware (122gms), Transfer Printed Wares (84 gms) and Cane-coloured Ware. A number of Mocha Ware fragments were found. As the background colour and glaze is indistinguishable from Cane-coloured Ware it is likely some of the latter is actually Mocha Ware.



The Cream Ware (1740-1850), Pearl Ware (1770-1830/40), Staffordshire White Salt-glaze Stoneware (1720-1780) and the solitary Wheildon-type Ware (1740-1850) all span the change from the Post-medieval to Modern periods, when factory production became dominant.

Two sherds of hand-painted Pearl Ware are possibly from

Leeds and dated 1780-1790

Later types include Transfer Printed Ware, White Ware, Mocha Ware and Cane-coloured Ware, all within the 19<sup>th</sup> C. Pale blue Transfer Print is probably the earliest, being likely to be late 18<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> C, and the brown and white Transfer Print is the latest coming in at around 1840. Both Late Brown Ware and Late Mottled Ware were found. These, and some of the white Ware could be 20<sup>th</sup> C.

The forms for only a few could be identified. These were mainly cups, bowls, jugs and one plate. One of the hand-painted Pearl Ware sherds is possibly from a tea bowl.

One class of find that is difficult to date is Unglazed Red Earthenware. 13 fragments of this type were found, most of them in the western trench and nearly all attributable to plant pots, largely by their rim type. One large piece may be part of a red clay tile or a big pot. These are most likely to be late 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> C.

## INTERPRETATION

The soil profile in the two trenches is the thinnest recorded in Bingham. The maximum depth to the underlying red clay was 30 cm, but in most pits it was less than 20 cm. This, together with the fact that the pottery sherds show no signs of being eroded, suggests that the soil has never been cultivated.

## Pre-Christian

The earliest pottery recovered from the trenches is Roman. Pottery of this age has also been found in nearby test pits ([CB11](#), [CB15](#), [CB20](#), [CB33](#)), while the pits along Cherry Street to the south, particularly [LA09](#), yielded sufficient to postulate Roman habitation in this area. Cherry Street lies along the eastern edge of the most important Roman site in central Bingham. It was found during a pre-build investigation in 2005. Though no evidence of habitation was uncovered during this investigation evidence of agricultural and industrial activity and a cemetery were found ( See Archaeological Project Services *Report 52/06* and a summary in Transactions of the Thoroton Society, 110 (2006), p 129). In CB11, which is in the grounds of the modern rectory at the southern edge of the churchyard, sherds found in a posthole that topped below a layer containing Roman Grey Ware were indeterminate, but possibly Roman. However, in all of these pits the soil is considerably thicker than in the churchyard. In CB11, for example, it is 1.1 metres deep and is likely to have been cultivated. Though a domestic source for the Roman pottery in the churchyard cannot be ruled out, neither can an alternative source. It was common practice for early Christians to establish their churches in pre-existing sacred sites. The position of this one is at the edge of what would have been boggy ground for millennia before the Roman occupation. Iron Age people are known to have their sacred sites in such localities. Though no Iron Age pottery was recovered in these trenches sherds of it were found in CB33, which is about 100 metres to the north west.

It is possible, therefore, that this was a sacred site long before Christianity arrived in Bingham and that the Roman pottery is associated in some way with religious activities on this site.

## Early Christian

There is no mention of a church in Bingham in the Domesday Book, though this does not mean that there was not one. In fact, the kingdom of Mercia became Christian in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. In the early days there is likely to have been a cross at the site of the present



church around which the congregation gathered during visits to the village by itinerant priests. At some time after this a church would have been built, though at first it is likely to have been a timber and mud walled structure with a thatched roof. These early churches were in public spaces and the pottery found around them could have been domestic rubbish. The Early/Middle Saxon sherd found in the trench has what appears to be organic residue on the inside, which may suggest a domestic origin. Another of the same period was found in [CB15](#) about 60 m to the west suggesting local activity during this time. Late Saxon or Saxo-Norman pottery has been found in several pits close by ([CB11](#), [CB14](#), [CB15](#), [CB20](#), [CB33](#)). Thus, while it is possible that the pottery from the Early/Middle Anglo-Saxon period reflects on activities associated with the church, it is probably more likely to be related to domestic activity nearby.

## **The Medieval church**

Based on architectural styles work on building the parish church is considered to have started around 1220 and to have been completed a century later. Interestingly, the font has been dated on style as from around 1150, though it could have been from an earlier church. The earliest record of a rector is 1226. Work in the later building stages is likely to have been funded by Sir Richard de Bingham and his son William. Some rebuilding was done in the early 15<sup>th</sup> C and considerable restoration took place during the time Robert Miles was rector in 1845-46. For more details of church history go to:

[www.binghamparishchurch.org.uk/StMarys/StMary.html](http://www.binghamparishchurch.org.uk/StMarys/StMary.html)

The medieval assemblage is quite unlike any found in domestic sites throughout Bingham. While in all the domestic sites Nottingham fabrics are dominant, here they are not. Even among the 12<sup>th</sup> C splashed ware sherds only one is from Nottingham. The others are not local. In the 13<sup>th</sup> C, when the new church would have been under construction there are some Nottingham fabrics, all of which do not extend beyond the Black Death. However, the assemblage is dominated by Medieval Local Fabrics, made locally at kiln sites at present unknown, and Non-local fabrics, which were brought into the area. Their source is also not known, though there is one Lincoln Glazed Ware sherd.

Both the local and the non-local fabrics have a long date range, extending into the 15<sup>th</sup> century. While it is reasonable to assume that much of this pottery was deposited during the 13<sup>th</sup> – early 14<sup>th</sup> C when the church was being built, the date range for these fabrics is so long that it could also encompass the period of rebuilding in the late 14<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> C. The Midland Purple Ware, with a long date range (1400-1700) and sherds of roughly coeval Late Medieval Local Fabrics almost certainly date from the period of rebuilding.

The likelihood is that this pottery was deposited by the building workers and has a direct connection to the church itself.

One interesting sherd is a fragment of a medieval green glazed roof tile. Fragments of glazed roof tiles were found field walking and in pits associated with the medieval manor house ([CB01](#) and [CB34](#)). The current roof of stone tiles and slate dates from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## **After the medieval period**

There is a good range of pottery types from the post-medieval period, but the most abundant from the early post-medieval is Cistercian Ware. This is interesting because in the test pits the most abundant Cistercian Ware was collected from CB11 and CB20, two pits very close to the church. Janet Spavold and Sue Brown (pers Comm.) who have worked extensively on the kiln sites in Ticknall where the Cistercian Ware was made, came to be-

lieve that Cistercian Ware ceased to be made in around 1550, during the reign of King Edward VI when there was considerable persecution of Roman Catholics. Cistercian Ware mugs and cups were often decorated with the Acanthus leaf, a symbol of Roman Catholicism. It is interesting that so much broken domestic Cistercian Ware should be found close to the church; it is as though the vessels were taken there and symbolically broken at the height of the persecution of Catholics as a sign that the Roman church was being renounced.

There is nothing unusual about the remaining fabric types. In particular there is no reflection in the post-medieval pottery of anything that may have happened to the church during the 17<sup>th</sup> C Civil Wars. The range of forms they represent includes chamber pots, cups, bottles, plates, bowls, jars, mugs and dishes. These are all forms that characterise domestic rubbish and suggest that this is what this is.

This conclusion is emphasised by the coarse earthenware. It was being made from around 1675 to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and is the most abundant fabric type recorded (814 grams). Although the five most common fabrics are present in the collection, Red-bodied Black Glazed Coarse Earthenware is dominant. Many of the sherds found were small and not attributable to forms, but others clearly represent jars and pancheons, again domestic in origin.

The brown salt-glaze stoneware is predominantly 18th century with two sherds dated to the late Victorian period. The range of forms is again domestic and includes such as ink bottles and a stew pot as well as jars likely to have been used in the kitchen and pantry. There is no obvious connection between these pots and the church

The cemetery on The Banks was opened in 1888 after which the churchyard gradually ceased being used for burial. The Modern pottery includes very little, except perhaps the plant pots, Late Brown Ware and Late Mottled Ware, that might be 20<sup>th</sup> C in origin. Most of the sherds were small, but among the forms that could be identified are a tea bowl, cups, bowls, jugs and a plate. Again this is domestic rubbish, but it cannot be discounted that some of the sherds are from vases and other types of vessel that would be found on graves in a cemetery.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Perhaps the most significant observation made about these trenches is that the soil does not appear ever to have been cultivated. This contrasts with the soil in test pits close by and gives some support to the supposition that the Roman finds here may not be domestic in origin, but could hint at the site being a sacred one of importance to the local community before the arrival of Christianity in the 7th C.

Of all the finds related to the Christian era, only the medieval assemblage seems to tell us anything about the church. It is so unlike any of the domestic assemblages found in test pits elsewhere in Bingham and fits so well with the dates that it known the church was being built that the assemblage must be telling us something about the workers building the church. The low proportion of Nottingham glazed fabrics in relation to local and non-local fabrics is unusual. The relatively poor quality local fabrics suggests the assemblage was deposited partly by labourers in the workforce, while the high content of non-local fabrics suggests that some of them came from outside the local area. The one piece of green glazed roof tile gives a clue to the structure of the medieval roof.

All the finds from the post-medieval and Modern periods have a strong domestic signature and seems to suggest that they originated as domestic rubbish deposited by townspeople near the church. Some of the 19th century material could be from vases, which may have been used in the churchyard, but tea cups, plates, bottles, pancheons and storage jars were all recognised forms and these are unlikely to reflect on any activity done in the church. Very few finds could be attributed to the 20th C. This accords with the opening of the cemetery in 1888 and the gradual cessation of burials in the churchyard after this.