

# DISCOVERING BINGHAM

Quarterly NEWSLETTER of the **Bingham Heritage Trails Association**

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

[www.binghamheritage.org.uk](http://www.binghamheritage.org.uk)

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Welcome to the latest newsletter of Bingham Heritage Trails Association.

In this issue we report on a recently completed archaeological dig in Warner's paddock and continue our look at the results of our research on Bingham in World War II

Finally, we look ahead to an important centenary and to the next issue of the newsletter.

We welcome new members; our website gives all the information you need to join us.

## The Warner's Paddock Dig

Five years ago, BHTA finished an archaeological investigation in Bingham which involved digging 57 one-metre square test in people's gardens. The results provided interesting insights into the development of Bingham town from prehistoric times to the present day.



*The dig gets underway*

There was strong evidence that the original core of the town was around the church, East Street and Cherry Street areas, where there was significant evidence of Roman and Anglo-Saxon occupation.

In particular there was enough Roman pottery at the south end of Cherry Street to suggest there may have been a Roman house here.

We also dug 5 pits in Warner's Paddock, the area of grazing land behind the Bowls Club. One pit produced enough Roman pottery to suggest some sort of residential activity here too.

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We carried out a geophysical survey to see if there were any clues below ground level in the rest of the field – you may be familiar with the term if you have watched archaeology programmes on television. This produced a map showing that the area was crisscrossed by ditches that looked as they may have been the boundaries of a number of small fields. At the time we were not able to follow this up with any excavations, as would normally have happened after the geophysics.



This year, however, the opportunity arose to investigate the area by digging some exploratory trenches to see what we could find. During the first half of July, we dug three such trenches and managed to find evidence of the suspected field boundary ditches in each trench.

The ditches had been dug into bedrock and then filled in with soil either at the time, to permit planting of boundary hedges, or later. The Romano-British farmers of the day were well known (by archaeologists) for throwing their rubbish in the boundary ditches and Warner's Paddock was no exception! The fact that we found little pottery that was not Roman confirmed our original suspicion that these ditches were of Roman origin.



*Potentially high-status Roman pottery*

We will be assessing what we have found with the help of pottery identification specialists so as to flesh out the results. The town council has helped out with a grant to help fund the investigation and may host a small exhibition late in the year. Whatever happens, you will be able to read it all up on the BHTA website and future newsletters. It is already clear the site represents a significant part of Bingham's history and will repay further investigation in the future.



*Pottery fragments*



We offer our thanks to all the volunteers who undertook several different jobs, including digging, cleaning, sorting, carrying and providing advice.



*Animal remains*

## Continuing the story of Bingham in WW2 – a BHTA research project

Just as with Bingham's fallen, there are many interesting and inspiring stories to be found among those who survived. A few examples should give a flavour of what we are discovering.

- *Sapper William Matthews, who was the brother of James McGeorge's wife Edith, took part in the Operation Barclay landings in Greece in August 1943. A pretend invasion of Greece, they were a subsidiary part of Operation Mincemeat in which a fake corpse was used to give misleading information to the Germans. The story was told in the 1956 film, *The Man Who Never Was*, and is also the subject of a forthcoming film, *Operation Mincemeat*, due for release in April 2022. Matthews was taken prisoner, returning to the UK after the war where he qualified as a Chartered Surveyor.*



- *Pilot Officer Edwin Lionel (Ted) Hitchcock, was the son of a watchmaker and jeweller with a shop on Market Street, Bingham. From 1942 to 1944 he was a Wireless Operator and Air Gunner in a medium bomber squadron flying some 49 'operational sorties'; well above the normal maximum of 30. After the war, he returned to his position as a Rating and Valuation Officer for Bingham Rural District Council.*
- *James Arthur (Jim) Bingham was one of several Bingham men who joined the Merchant Navy. He served on the Arctic convoys, qualifying for the Arctic Star, as well as being involved in D-day operations. He returned to Bingham after the war and became a plumbing and heating engineer.*
- *Corporal Doris Fewster, Women's Auxiliary Air Force, served from October 1942 to June 1946, becoming secretary to the Commanding officer at RAF Great Massingham. After the war she became typing pool supervisor for a company in Nottingham.*

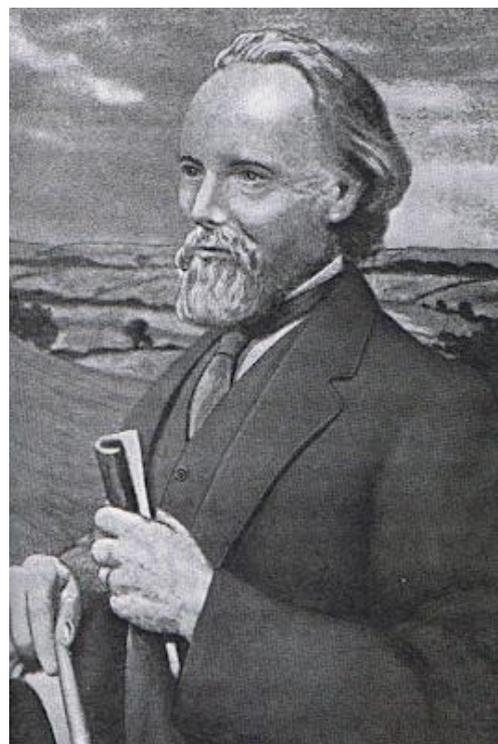
There are many similar stories we have yet to tell. Despite our best efforts, however, we cannot be certain that our list of returnees is complete or fully accurate. The individual profiles we have compiled also vary. In some cases, we have access to family records that enable us to present a comprehensive picture of the individual's life and war service. In others, significant information, particularly about war service, is missing. In yet other examples, we have some lingering uncertainty about the accuracy of what we think we have found. In all these instances, we hope that visitors to our web pages may be able to assist. Even small details can help us to complete the jigsaw.

### **And finally: Watch this space**

*December 2022 sees the centenary of the death of James Prior Kirk, who wrote under the name of James Prior.*

*A contemporary of DH Lawrence, he lived in Bingham between 1891 and 1922. In recognition of his connection to the town, BHTA is collaborating on a project to erect "blue plaques" on the two houses he is known to have occupied. Keep a look out, in the press and on social media, for further details of their unveiling.*

*The next issue of the newsletter will contain a feature on James and his importance to Nottingham and the UK's literary history.*



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