

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 LONG WALK IS NEARING ITS END - BUT NOT QUITE!

When in November 2004 BHTA started a project to investigate the *History of Settlement* of the parish, and *Discovering Bingham* was only in its fifth edition, we knew we would be field walking but no one was exactly sure what this would involve. Five years later we are all older and wiser and looking forward to the New Year when finally we can show what we have achieved. In this issue the following News Up-Date gives some information on the special events that are now in the planning stages.

As many members and readers will know we have walked all the arable land in the parish searching for man-made objects on the surface over a two metre wide strip along lines placed at 20 metre centres. This has produced well over 50,000 objects that have been identified, recorded and analysed. All this has been regularly reported in this newsletter but what we didn't realise, until we did the calculation, was that this has involved the team of volunteers walking a total distance of 2,400 kilometres!

That is the equivalent of walking from Bingham to Moscow or the distance of Napoleon's retreat from the



Russian capital to Paris. (see above) Hopefully this will give us all a greater sense of achievement than it did for poor old Bonaparte!

But why the 'not quite' in our headline? Although we have drawn a line under the main project field walking so that we can write up the results of the project, we have already walked a field which was once within the parish boundary because it seemed likely to include some interesting finds. There were also a few areas of pasture that couldn't be walked. One of these is now due to be ploughed and we have permission to put a team on the ground when conditions are right. Any significant findings will be reported and placed on our web site as a supplement to the main project. So some of us may be covering a few more kilometres in 2010.

NEWS UP-DATE

The Heritage Lottery Fund has extended the end date for the *History of Settlement* project to 1st March next year. We did not ask for this, but they phoned to say that they are closing the account on the Local Heritage Initiative on 31st March 2010 and we must have all our bills paid by then. We had, in fact, lost several weeks when Geoff Ashton's computer went down and we had to adjust to new software. This was the first computer failure in the five-year project and it had to come at such a critical time! The HLF, showing welcome understanding, offered the extension to be on the safe side.

Work on the 150 page, lavishly illustrated book, '*Bingham Back in Time...*' is well underway; it has been written in draft and is going through



Committee members and others attending our annual Hot Pot Supper on the 21st November were given a sneak preview of the BHTA book 'Bingham, Back in Time...' which is due to be published early in 2010.

editing right now. We have chosen a printer, but the re-writing and other work that will follow the editing is likely to make the end stages a slow process. We now aim to have the book out early next year. It tells the story of our five-year investigation into the 500,000 year history of settlement in the parish in a form that will interest anyone who lives in, or knows, Bingham or has a general fascination with local matters historical.

For those who wish to go deeper into the subject, we have had discussions with Ambrow, who look after our web site, and have agreed to redesign and modernise the current web site before adding extensive, new material to it. Our site is now nearly eight years old. We have over 100 visits a day to the site, which is high for a small village site, but we know from emails sent to us that it is used by people all over the world. Our current plan is to have all the new material on the redesigned site by the end of this year,

but we will not make it available until *Bingham - Back in Time...* is printed, so that we can launch both at a single ceremony.

We have booked space at Bingham library from 5th January for an exhibition that will last six months. We are going to try to get the exhibition set up early in January, but there is no one in BHTA with any experience of doing this sort of thing, so we might be a bit slow doing it.

The curator of the University Museum has been in contact and told us that she has had boxes specially made to store our finds and will be ready to re-box the collection and take it from us in the new year. There will be a lot of work for us before that, re-bagging and checking that the right find is in the right bag. Some of the bags are badly worn and the writing on them can hardly be seen.

Lastly, the Highways Agency has given permission for BHTA to have the Roman well on the

A46. This was featured in the September issue of *Discovering Bingham*. By the time you read this it might even be on a pallet in someone's garage waiting to be reconstructed. We will be looking for ideas and support in finding a suitable site in the town to re-assemble it.

PARTY TIME!

Yes, it's that time of year again. It's time to celebrate the season of goodwill with outings with friends, family and colleagues, with parties and pantomimes, fairs and festivities. We know how to enjoy ourselves in Bingham! Has it always been like this? Has Bingham always enjoyed a party or celebration? Well, trawling through the newspapers from the eighteenth and nineteenth century it would appear that Bingham needed very little excuse to have a 'knees up'. Perhaps, it was because life for many Bingham residents was hard, but news of a victory in a skirmish in some far flung country, for example, and, it would appear that Bingham was ready to light a bonfire in the Market Square and dance until dawn. Not that they rushed out immediately and built their bonfire and brought out a barrel of ale; no, judging by the descriptions of the many celebrations in Bingham, they were planned down to the last detail. Intensive preparations were made and they seemed to follow a pattern possibly laid down over time. There was usually a feast, a procession, bell ringing, bonfires, illuminations and even fireworks. Bingham was also at pains to ensure that all residents were able to

participate in the festivities.

For example, in March 1787, the Nottingham Journal reported on Bingham's celebration of George the Third's recovery from illness and his taking up the reins of government once more.



'At a meeting of the inhabitants of Bingham in this County on Monday 16th March, it was unanimously resolved to vote the following Thursday to that agreeable and loyal purpose. A liberal subscription was immediately entered into with the intention of enabling the lower class of parishioners to participate of the general joy on this occasion as well as the more opulent; an event in which all ranks are interested.'

Of the celebrations on the day, the Journal gave the following account:

'Accordingly, by six o'clock on Thursday morning, the bells were ringing and with very little intermission continued until late at night. A splendid blue flag was hoisted on the battlements of the church on which was delineated a regal crown, with the letters GR and the following motto 'Vivant Rex et Regina'.

Similarly at the celebration to mark the Coronation of George the Fourth in July 1821, the Nottingham Journal reported: 'A committee of ten respectable inhabitants was chosen to make a collection and to



superintend the whole concern, in order that the poor might have a day of jollity as well as their more affluent neighbours. The rector of Bingham very generously headed the subscription paper with ten guineas, four fat sheep and two tons of coal, added to which ten other sheep, another ton of coal and upwards of £50 was collected.'

The more affluent members of the community later repaired to partake of a fine dinner at the Chesterfield Arms.

The day always began with the ringing of church bells, sometimes as early as 4 o'clock. This was probably necessary for the roasting of the meat. The Nottingham Journal gave a fine account of the preparations for the feast to celebrate the Coronation of George IV when fourteen sheep had to be roasted:

'On the morning of the Coronation Day (Thursday 19th July) as early as 4 o'clock, the bells proclaimed the festive morn, about which time two furnaces were lighted up in the Market Place, for the purpose of roasting whole eight of the fleecy victims; the others were cut in pieces and cooked at the different public houses.'

Bingham loved processions either to start an occasion or to lead from one part of the celebration to another. At Queen Victoria's Coronation Festivities in June 1838 the

Nottingham Review gave a detailed account of the procession, which started the day's festivities. First a trumpeter on a white charger went to various parts of the town to bring residents to the Market Square to prepare for a procession round the town, where they were marshalled into position by sixty stewards. First came a: 'Trumpeter on a white charger

The Post Office Flag (Blue and pink edged in white with pink rosettes with VR and a crown at the centre)

Band

Church Wardens and Guardians of the Poor (Four abreast)

Twelve Managers decorated with broad blue ribbons and pink favors (Four abreast)

Flag of the Chesterfield Arms Friendly Society (Father supporting emblem of the sun) The members with wives and daughters (Four men and four women alternately)

Flag belonging to the Harmonic Society of Odd Fellows (four abreast decorated with their different emblems and regalia)

Flag belonging to the King's Arm's Inn Friendly Society (members four abreast)

Flag of the Manchester Society of Odd Fellows from The Blue Bell Inn (the Society in their regalia)

Band of Music

Flag

A number of ladies and tradesmen four abreast

Flag of the Friendly Sister's Society from William IV (David playing his harp)

A large portion of inhabitants male and female four abreast (numbering 1200)'

They marched round the Market Square, through Market Street, Longacre, Cherry Street, Church Street into the Market Square. It must have been quite a sight, and was, according to an eyewitness, very elegant. But the sight to have been seen must have been at the celebrations for George IV's coronation when even the liquor had a procession on its way to the Market Place.

'By 10-00am, betwixt three and four hundred gallons of ale and porter were drawn in a cart covered in laurel by men with gilt staves, preceded by the committee and a band of music, with bouquets of the national colour in their bosoms.'

It must also have 'been quite a sight' at Queen Victoria's Coronation to see the residents of Bingham sit down to dine at thirteen tables, each ninety feet long, covered in white calico and decorated with laurel and flowers and, according to the Review, dinner was served as though they were in an Inn.

Before anyone could dine, however, a President to oversee the proceedings and to propose toasts had to be led to the seat of honour. This chair would be 'elegantly lined and decorated'. For Queen Victoria the Reverend Robert Lowe presided and was led to his seat at the top of the centre table by the trumpeter on his white charger.

Children did not join in the dinner or procession, but were fed plum pudding during the morning.

After the formal proceedings, sports and games led up to teatime, followed by bonfires and fireworks and dancing in the Market Square until dawn.

In the eighteenth century, the more affluent members of society did not participate in the general feasting, but would repair to the Royal Oak (Chesterfield) to partake, as the Nottingham Journal tells us, 'of a fine dinner with excellent wine, followed by music and the singing of glees'. But in the nineteenth century, it was more egalitarian and at the party to celebrate the ending of the Napoleonic wars, the correspondent to the Nottingham Journal was at pains to point out that all classes of society sat down together.

So, Bingham liked to party and they liked to celebrate together as a town and a community. They were patriotic and the splendour of their festivities and their patriotism was acknowledged in Nottinghamshire. The Nottingham Journal writes, *'Perhaps at no place in the county of Nottingham (taking into account the amount of its population) was the coronation of his Majesty King George IV more loyally and zealously celebrated than in Bingham'*. And though at the George IV party, the effects of

the 400 gallons of ale on some residents led them to 'partake of the *elegant and polite science of pugilism*,' by Queen Victoria's Coronation, the event was marred only by, *'two gentlemen having drunk too deeply.'*

Enjoy your celebrations!

WHO LOST SIXPENCE?



A silver sixpence from the reign of William III, dated 1696. Unlike a piece of pot or a discarded clay pipe, finding a coin when field walking leads to the question: What did this loss mean to its owner? Today it would be like losing a £2.00 coin. Then, it would be about 2 or 3 month's rent for a farm labourer or the cost of getting a cart through the Toll gate for a farmer or the duty on a bushel of barley to the Maltster. This Elizabethan duty, levied to discourage the production of too much malt, was repealed a year after this coin was minted.

DON'T FORGET YOUR 2010 BHTA CALENDAR

The theme this year is Cottages, Church and Chapels over the years. On sale, only £3.50, at the newsagents in Eaton Place, or direct from Geoff Ashton.

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