

# DISCOVERING BINGHAM

Quarterly NEWSLETTER of the **Bingham Heritage Trails Association**  
[www.binghamheritage.org.uk](http://www.binghamheritage.org.uk) Registered Charity No: 1090475 Issue No.58 - December 2017

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

## THE CENTENARY YEAR

It probably has not escaped your notice that November 11<sup>th</sup> 2018 will be the centenary of the end of fighting in World War One. Technically the war was not over until the signing of the somewhat harshly drafted Treaty of Versailles in 1919.

Regular readers of "Discovering Bingham" will also know of BHTA's project to research the military and family histories of Bingham men and women who served in what became known as the Great War, the war to end all wars, the war that would be over by Christmas!

BHTA with its partners The Bingham and District British Legion, the Women's Institute, Bingham Town Council and others are planning a two day commemorative event to mark this historic centenary anniversary. It will be held at the Methodist Centre on November the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> 2018 and admission will be free.

There will be an exhibition over two days of the findings of our research together with displays of items from the Sherwood Foresters Museum and artefacts from the 1920s

and 1930s from Nottingham City Museums. This will be probably the first major museum quality exhibition held in Bingham for many years. It will be a major token of remembrance and a source of information for those interested in learning more about this part of our heritage.

Organizations, both amateur and professional, who have mounted such exhibitions often report that visitors to their exhibition often say "If I'd known what you were doing, I could have loaned you an artefact from our family memorabilia", be it an item of uniform, contemporary photographs or whatever else they have stashed away in a forgotten cupboard, drawer or loft. NOW is the time

to tell us and offer to loan something to the exhibition. We will be as interested in civilian as well as military items. Our contact details are on the back page.



*Our entry for this year's Christmas Tree Festival was based on the WW1 research project with photos of over 30 Bingham residents who served in the war. The base panels showed the 16 pages of the Roll of Honour, the story of one individual and one family, which are examples of the many on our website, and photos illustrating some aspects of life in the Town during the hostilities.*

There will also be two evening events. On Friday night we plan to stage a one act play about life in the trenches written and performed by the Bingham Musical Theatre Group, performances of contemporary classical music and choral work plus readings of diaries, war poems and other material. This will be an evening reflecting on the war just ended. On the Saturday evening there will be a concert looking forward to the better times after the war and featuring The Bingham Toot Hill Big Band, The Stormy Weather Boys and the Bingham Barber Group, with some contemporary readings.

Needless to say we are being helped by a great many people and we have been promised funding from a variety of sources. BUT we shall need more help! We shall be needing stewards, help with designing, erecting and dismantling the exhibition, publicity, research, transport to and from museum stores etc. etc. If you'd like to get involved in any way please contact us.

And please put the dates in your 2018 diary now so we can welcome you to one or more of the events.

## LONG ACRE TEST PITS

We have finished the work on the Long Acre test pits dug in 2016. In the December 2016 issue of *Discovering Bingham* we explained that the reason for these pits was to test the

hypothesis that Long Acre was laid out in the Norman period as part of a planned village. In such villages the streets formed a rectilinear plan with a main street in the middle, flanked by two parallel back streets. Several cross lanes linked them to each other. The farmers lived along the main street and the poorer cottagers along a back street. The conjectural map of Bingham for 1586 certainly looked like this. Long Acre (called Husband Street then) was the main street where the farmers lived. The Banks the southern back street and the line of East Street, Church Street and the Market Place the northern back street, where many of the cottagers lived.

An examination of all 73 of the Bingham test pits shows that most of the streets have their origin long before the Norman Conquest and that geology and topography provided important controls on their position and orientation. The Normans would have had to do very little to this street plan to make it look like one of their planned villages.

The one street that does not easily fit into the organic

structure of Bingham's street plan was Long Acre. We dug seven test pits along this street that were not close to any junction with a cross lane (Market Street and Cherry Street). They all showed signs of considerable disturbance during building and other development in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and natural soil was encountered beneath the man-made deposits in only five of them. In this soil there were only seven sherds of medieval pottery, spanning three hundred years of history. This is not a sign that anyone lived here in that period. The first good sign of habitation was the appearance of abundant pieces of Midland Yellow Ware, made in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, which fits with the 1586 map.

An explanation for the look of the village in 1586 might be that the Normans did modify the original street layout and move the farmers to live on one street in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, but the arrangement did not survive. There is the slenderest of evidence for this. Nottingham Splashed Ware, which was made in the 12<sup>th</sup> century turned up in top spoil and the natural soil in



*Examples of Nottingham Splashed Ware (left) and Midland Yellow Ware pots from the Brewhouse Yard Museum collection with typical fragments that we might unearth in one of the test pits.*

three pits along Long Acre. This is the only medieval pottery of a specific age to plot in a line along the road. We know from field walking the parish that from the early 13<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries there were farming communities living around the margin of the parish, which implies that not many of them would have been living in the village. If the Norman lord of the manor did design a new village street plan in the 12<sup>th</sup> century by adding Long Acre and having the farmers live along it they left within a century and went to live in farms along the parish boundary. This was before Sir Richard de Bingham came to live in the old manor house in 1266. Only when the farmers returned to the village in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries did they go to live along Long Acre.

We shall never know what actually happened. The test pits show quite well that most of the streets in Bingham originated well before the arrival of the Normans, but it cannot be ruled out that they did try to redesign the village in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Sir Richard almost certainly did make changes in the late 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, but it was not until the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries that Bingham came to look like a planned Norman village.

## **EVACUATED TO BINGHAM IN WW2**

In August 2017 Brenda Cowell arrived in Bingham for her first visit in some 50 years. She brought with her a signed copy of *A History of Bingham* by Adelaide Wortley, as well as some other memorabilia of her time spent in the town. She felt strongly that these items should, as she put it,



*Brenda Cowell and David Mason with her 1954 photo [inset] of the Nicolsons, with dog Jill, who were "Uncle Frank and Auntie Frances" to her and her sister as evacuees in WW2.*

"return home". Hence, on August 16<sup>th</sup>, Brenda and her daughter Linda met with BHTA Secretary David Mason in the *Picture Café* where the treasures were delivered into our custody.

The then Brenda Cook had been evacuated from Mitcham in South London in 1943 to escape the danger of flying bombs. She described the process of evacuation as very hard, having been taken by her mother to King's Cross station where she boarded a train that eventually brought her to Bingham. Brenda, aged 9, arrived in the company of her younger sister Betty, aged 7, with her luggage and gas mask and was taken to a hall where the evacuees were introduced to their host families.

The girls were initially taken by a Mrs Sharp to a row of six cottages on Grantham Road where they were separately billeted. Brenda recalls the sisters being unhappy at being separated and, moreover, "living conditions were not very comfortable and we were hungry". Brenda does not know how it came to be known

that there were problems. However, "one day Mrs Sharp arrived... and took us... to meet Mr and Mrs Nicholson". Francis (Frank) and Frances Nicholson, lived in Moor Farmhouse (now 8-10 East Street). They had no children of their own but rented rooms to Adelaide Wortley who worked at the Church School where Brenda and her sister became pupils. It was at Moor Farm that they spent the remainder of their time in Bingham. Brenda's memories of the time spent with the Nicolsons are entirely happy. Living on a farm, food was no problem and "we couldn't have been better cared for". She returned home early in 1945 but kept in touch with "Auntie Frances and Uncle Frank" over an extended period. Indeed the items she left in BHTA's care were Christmas presents from 1954.

After such a long absence, Brenda was keen to reacquaint herself with Bingham. As well as the station, she immediately recognised the footpath skirting the churchyard and Old Church House; the then

Church School. Inside, Brenda described how the layout had differed in those days. She also had a keen recollection of having been "ticked off" by Miss Wortley for "not paying attention"! Having in later life become a successful competition ballroom dancer, she was delighted to hear that the building was still put to community uses that include dancing. From the school to Moor Farmhouse was only a short step and, despite the fact that the building has been extensively remodelled, Brenda recognised it and identified various features she recalled from her stay.



*Councillor Rowan Bird [a long standing member of BHTA] was Guest of Honour, with his Consort Nikki, at our annual fundraising Quiz Supper in his capacity of Town Mayor. Having only recently been appointed to the office the evening of 18th November was his first official engagement.*

Frank died in 1984 and Frances in 1993, and Brenda was keen to pay her respects at their grave. With the help of the Town Clerk and the cemetery groundsman, we were able to locate it and facilitate her leaving a floral tribute. It was a pleasure to meet Brenda and to have the opportunity to help rekindle her memories of an important episode in her life, as indeed, of the country as a whole.

## **BINGHAM COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS FAIR**

Since the change of format for the Town Winter Fair in the Market Place, we, with other local charities, set up our stalls in the Parish Church for the morning on Saturday 25th November. The event attracted a good crowd and our Photo Archive display attracted a lot of interest, along with sales of the 2018 BHTA Calendar.



## **BHTA CONTACTS**

General e-mail: [bhta@binghamheritage.org.uk](mailto:bhta@binghamheritage.org.uk)

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**VICE CHAIRMAN:**

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

## **2018 FOURTEENTH LECTURE SERIES**

Methodist Centre  
at 7.30pm.

Admission FREE

**Thursday 8th February**

Rosie Collin

Radcliffe WW1 Group

Rockley Memorial

Gardens

**Thursday 8th March**

Tony Knight

Metal Detecting

Adventure

with exhibition of finds

**Thursday 10th May**

Adrian Henstock

Finding Charles I –

Newark and the Civil War