

# 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

## WW1 COMMEMORATION EVENTS

Thank you, Bingham, for supporting our three events on November 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. The public response has been gratifying and made the work involved worthwhile. Over the past four years BHTA has been working on a Heritage Lottery Fund sponsored project to research Bingham's involvement in World War One. From the start, as well as commemorating those who died, we aimed to also honour those who served and returned.

Our web site contains the family histories of all those whose names were recorded in the bound Bingham Roll of Honour, kept by the parish church. We also researched the newspapers of the time, war diaries and other sources. A small number of families responded to our requests for information and particularly photographs. Our research provided the core of a two-day exhibition we staged in the Methodist Community Centre. The visitors' book included many complimentary comments! We also hosted two school visits from Year 6 pupils at Robert Miles Junior and Carnarvon Schools. We know of several visitors who returned for a second and even third viewing as there was much of interest to be absorbed.



***BHTA members preparing the Poppy Cascade that hung in the Methodist Church entrance for the exhibition and concerts.***

The exhibition displayed details of all the Bingham men recorded on the war memorial, including the three "new" names that we found during research, with details of the key events in which Bingham soldiers were involved. The posters were complemented by displays of military artefacts loaned to us by several private collectors and the Sherwood Foresters' Museum. Favourite items amongst the visitors, especially the school children, were the trench periscope and the Great Coat weighing 3.7kg. A particular "star" attraction was the "medical corner" run by Sheila Barton, granddaughter of Sapper Charles Penson, illustrating how the wounded were treated and processed. Information about some of the survivors and their families was complemented by a display of domestic items dating from the 1920s and 30s. Nottingham City Museum

"Access Artefacts" loaned these items which included a 1920 typewriter visitors were able to use - a great hit particularly with the many children who had never seen one before!

We also presented two commemoration concerts which combined a number of readings with various musical items. Friday night's performance looked back at the war and some of the Bingham men who gave their lives. Two readers presented excerpts from war diaries which described some of the horrors of war but also some humorous moments, combined with some familiar and some less well known war poems. The Bridge Singers from Radcliffe performed a selection of songs by composers who lived during the WW1 period. The "Armistice String Quartet" came together especially for

this concert. They played the only surviving chamber work by George Butterworth, a Lieutenant in the Durham Light Infantry who was killed in action on the Somme in August 1916. The "Suite in Five Movements for string quartet", written in 1910, rediscovered in 2001, has rarely been played. The Cranmer Company of Singers performed a selection of sacred music which gave the second half of the concert an appropriately solemn ambiance. The evening ended with readings celebrating the end of the war concluding with a moving reading of "In Flanders Fields" by John McCrae.

Saturday evening's concert was more-light hearted and celebrated the peace to which our surviving soldiers returned. Two readers gave us some snapshots of the life led by some survivors and highlighted Lloyd George's promise of "homes for heroes", the votes for women movement, the Great Depression and the General Strike. The Stormy Weather Boys programme included a hearty rendition of "Now this lousy war is over" and the song from Warhorse, "Only Remembered". The Vale Voices community choir opened their performance with a medley of World War One songs. Then, to commemorate 100 years since the start of women's suffrage, they performed a selection of Suffragette marching songs, impressively marching around the audience as they did so. The second half continued the celebration with some rousing period music from the Bingham Toot Hill Big Band and a very popular



*Official opening by Cmdr. Judith Swann a Deputy Lieutenant of the County.*



*Central aisle of the exhibition with posters of the 'fallen' (L) and those that returned (R)*



*The fascination for children of a 1920s typewriter. 'Is it a computer?'*



*The Stormy Weather Boys in full flow during the Saturday evening concert.*



*The girls of the Bingham-School of Dance finish their 1920s tap dance routine.*

demonstration of the Charleston and a 1920s tap routine by the Bingham School of Dance.

The two days of events could not have happened without help and participation from so many people. All the musical contributors responded with appropriate programmes. Readers were supplied and rehearsed by the Bingham Audio Magazine. Ushers and Stewards were volunteers from the BHTA membership and the BHTA committee managed the programme, designed the information boards, organised the exhibition and produced the concert scripts. We are grateful to those organisations and individuals who contributed exhibits and Bingham Library and Hammond Property Services for support with publicity and printing. We could not have mounted this event anywhere else in Bingham and are grateful to the Methodist Hall management group for allowing us two and half days' exclusive use of the hall for a fraction of their normal rates! The event was financed by contributions from the "good causes" funds of Bingham, Rushcliffe and County Councillors, The Bingham Town Council, Notts County Council fund for WW1 commemorative events and Barratt Homes.

## **EIGHTEEN YEARS OF ARCHAEOLOGY WITH BHTA**

Sometimes you agree to do something without having the faintest idea what it is going to involve. BHTA started doing archaeology projects in 2001, when we concentrated on

producing leaflets that brought to the public what was already known about Bingham. Then in 2004 Gavin Kinsley, of Trent and Peak Archaeology, asked Geoff Ashton and Peter Allen if BHTA would like to consider doing a parish-wide field-walking survey. The Committee agreed to it, with none of us understanding that it was going to take three and a half winters to do the field walking with nearly 100 volunteers and then another two and a half years to identify and catalogue the finds, write the book *Bingham Back in Time* and build the web site. Bingham, with nearly all the farmland arable, is the perfect parish for this. The project, paid for by the Heritage Lottery Fund, enabled us to collect over 54,000 objects from 868 hectares. Then in 2011 the Heritage Lottery Fund paid for the test-pit project in which we dug 73 1-metre pits mostly in gardens in order to find out what was going on in the built-up part of the parish.

Examples of combined field walking and test pitting in whole parishes are very rare in England, but we found that it gave us a unique insight into the period of our history before 1086, when documentary evidence became available. What we have is a history going back 9000 years, which tells a story of where and when people lived in different parts of the parish. This story fits well with the results of the most recent research on the prehistoric movement of people across Europe.

The story, briefly, is this. From about 9000 to 6000 years ago hunter-gatherers

spent their summers mostly around the lake that used to exist north of the railway line. Then, about 6000 years ago, the first farmers came and settled permanently in the far south-western corner of the parish. There has been much discussion about whether these farmers were new people who came to England or whether the idea of farming arrived independently and the hunter-gatherers changed their ways. It looked to us that the farmers were new people; and genetic research suggests that this was the case. Over time, as their population increased, these settlers spread along the southern margins of the parish, but in the late Bronze Age or early Iron Age there was a major change. The first settled area disappeared and five new settlements sprang up in other parts of the parish, including one in Bingham itself. The most recent genetic research shows that it was during this period that the Beaker People arrived in England gradually spreading over the whole country, thus explaining the marked change in the way the people lived. These five settlements survived for one and a half thousand years, eventually disappearing in the 9<sup>th</sup> century leaving Bingham the dominant settlement.

During the Roman period we know that they built Margidunum and the Fosse Way, but it was field walking that showed just how important the parish was in their farming economy. The whole parish was cultivated with several small farms springing up in the second century only to disappear in the fourth when the Roman economy crashed.

The test pitting showed that Bingham grew out of one of the five Iron Age settlement sites. Until the Norman Conquest the centre of the village was roughly where Warner's Paddock is now, but it then shifted to the area around the modern Market Place. The new village centre was consolidated during the mid 13<sup>th</sup> to late 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, a time when we had a resident lord of the manor. He built a manor house, the foundations of which are now under modern buildings, along the north side of the Market Place. We found that the manor house had a gypsum-plaster and lime-ash floor and it is the oldest of this type so far recorded anywhere in England.

Out of all this we have written one book, built a very large and informative web site and have had six papers published in academic journals. Bingham is now widely known for this research. Our website has over 250 visits a day and Google searches for anything from flints to night soil will often lead to our site. There have been other benefits. We did archaeological projects in three of our schools. During one of them a little girl told us that it had been the best day of her life. We found this to be quite rewarding.

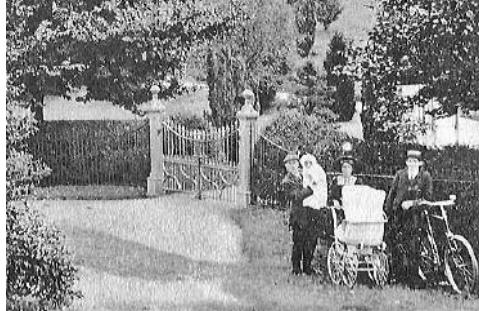
We have now ended our archaeological campaign, but there is still more to do including excavations at Crow Close and sites revealed by crop marks on Brackendale, Holme and Starnhill farms. All we need to start on them is a group of younger and fitter enthusiasts than us.

## **CEMETERY COMMITTEE** **MINUTES** *Continued from the September edition.*

Not all goes smoothly during the first two years after opening the cemetery in 1888. In October Mr. Adam Roadley reports that he has had two horses injured by the iron fencing around the cemetery and Mr Charles Brewster had a cow seriously injured. Could the committee place something on the spikes to prevent a recurrence? Later, Mr. Wright, the steward of Lord Carnarvon, had placed some wooden capping on the top of the iron fence around the cemetery, thus rendering the fencing almost useless as it could now be climbed over by boys. The addition of barbed wire was considered! In December rabbits have begun to burrow in the cemetery and it is resolved to get an estimate for wire netting to prevent them. Complaints were received that "fowls were destroying the flowers placed on the graves", the owner was required to "adopt some means of preventing them". There is also the problem of the proposed inscription on a headstone "in consequence of the composition being repulsive doggerel". A revised inscription is accepted. Then there is the ongoing saga of the defective lock on the gate. The committee had repeatedly

asked Messrs. Haynes of Clumber Street, Nottingham to attend to this. Eventually they did and presented a bill for 12s 3d. which the committee refuse to pay. This produced an irate reply from Messrs Haynes & Co. but as far as we can find they never did pay the 12s 3d. The committee was always careful in managing the ratepayers' funds.

Later that year a major purchase takes place. 24 tons of Beeston gravel is delivered to Bingham Station by the Great Northern Railway Company for the cost of £3 6s 9d., and carted to the cemetery by J. Shepherd for £1. Was the task of receiving it too much for the caretaker? At the next meeting the caretaker has resigned. A fortnight later Mr. Bacon appeared before the committee and states that he will accept the office of caretaker if the wages are raised to fourpence ha'penny per hour. No more is heard of Mr. Bacon's application! Eventually Mr. Smith the church sexton becomes the



*This early (c.1920) photo shows the cemetery gates and cast-iron posts that still exist and the spiked railings that were possibly removed in the 1940s to help the war effort.*

new caretaker. In the next few years further improvements are made. In March 1891 the committee obtain tenders for a wooden tool shed but later they decide to go for a brick building. Messrs Wood and Wilson's offer is £14. 13 s 9d which is accepted. Presumably that is the tool shed which still exists in the cemetery. Another improvement is a well to be sunk to a depth of 15 feet for the cost of £2 5s 3d.

Surprisingly there is no reference to a war taking place during the years 1914-1918. It is not until 1929 that the War Graves Commission approach the committee with a view to taking over responsibility for the graves of Private Green and Gunner Wilford. During the wartime period however there arises the controversial issue of fees for ministers officiating at funerals. The sensitive issue is deferred over several meetings until in October 1918 a set fee of 3 shillings is agreed. We are sure that there are more revelations of Bingham's past to be discovered in its 417 pages, all written in the handwriting of a person actually present at the meetings.

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