

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

RARE FIND FROM 400,000 BC

BHTA started walking the 2000 acres of arable land in the parish in the winter of 2004 and by Christmas this year will have completed this task. So far, over 36,000 man-made objects have been found, which will be analysed to provide a history of settlement in the area. The location of each find is recorded and, working with the Trent & Peak Archaeological Unit of Nottingham University and other experts, the date of each find is verified. Until recently the earliest recorded finds were flints dating from 10,000 BC.



Now our journey into Bingham's past has made a quantum leap, backwards! Jenny Brown, the flint expert in the T&PAU, was so excited when she examined some of last year's finds that she called in Dr. Roger Jacobi – a UK leading authority on the Palaeolithic period. He has now confirmed that one of the Bingham flints is just one of only six similar flint tools found in Nottinghamshire. He dates it as 'Lower Palaeolithic' a period that ended 250,000 years ago. The tool could have been made by Neanderthal man or even earlier by *Homo Heidelbergensis*; a species of

man that lived 400,000 and 500,000 years ago and is believed to be the direct ancestors of modern man. To give some idea of how long a time has passed since this tool was made - if the 11 miles between Bingham and Newark represented the last 2000 years, this flint would be around Moscow, or beyond.

The flint is a large flake that might have been used as a cutting tool. It is highly polished by wind and has a white patina that comes only with great age. Dr Jacobi is certain that it has not been transported by water and

could very well be local; that is, it was dropped near to where we found it by the person who made it. There is an alternative possibility, that it could have been carried here during the Anglian Ice Age, 400,000 years ago, which means it would have been made in a warmer period before the ice sheet moved south to cover the majority of Britain.

It is incredible to think that when our member, Sue Brough shown in the photo above, picked up this flint in 2005, the last time it had been handled was by a Stone Age hunter!

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2006 - 2007

The following is a summary of the main points of an illustrated report given by our Chairman, Peter Allen at the BHTA Annual General Meeting held in the Court House on 24th May.

With the ending of the churchyard project in May last year the Association's efforts have been devoted mainly to the 'History of Settlement in Bingham' project. Three public lectures were held and there were fund-raising and social events throughout the year. There are 73 paid-up members at the end of the year.

Field walking re-started in September 2006, as soon as the first wheat was through. Because of the pattern of crop rotation on Starnhill Farm this was to be the only opportunity to complete field walking it. The farm was completed by Christmas. One field was



walked on Holme Farm leaving all the rest of this farm to be done next season. Another field was done on Spring Farm and two on Brocker, completing both farms and except for two fields, the Brackendale Farms were also completed. For the first time,

several ploughed fields were walked. The ground was well weathered and proved to be very rewarding. In total, 66 weeks have been devoted to field walking since the project began. This year an average of 19 volunteers, out of a pool of 35 field walkers, went out each week. Throughout the year, the teams devoted to washing, bagging, data entry, numbering and grid referencing have managed to keep pace with the fieldwork. All the finds from year one have now been identified and classified and entered into the database.

Highlights of the year are:

Confirmation of a Lower Palaeolithic flint found in October 2005. (See page 1) An impressive array of flints tools has been picked up. The majority are late Neolithic to early Bronze Age and include some well-preserved arrowheads. (pictured left) They are concentrated in the south of the parish, suggesting that this was where the early farmers first settled.

A 100 metre square double enclosure, identified by crop marks on an air photograph, was surveyed and turned up a large number of Romano-British pot sherds along one side. Some of the pottery is Iron Age suggesting that this might have been a Romanised homestead.

Over 700 pieces of Roman pottery were picked up in a single field adjacent to Margidunum. Some bones that might be human were also found.

Six interviews for the Oral History Archive were done during the year. To keep the momentum of this project going new interviewers are required.



Two 'Wine and Finds' evenings (pictured above) were held when members and local farmers came to see some of the finds that have been picked up during field walking. For the first time, BHTA was involved in the end-of-term activities week at Toot Hill School. We provided a large number of images, which students then used to generate digital artwork. At the end of the week they displayed their artwork, which was sold and the proceeds given to charity.

The web site was upgraded in October 2006. Usage continues to grow. Since December 2006 the average number of visits per day has exceeded 100 for each month and in April was 160. The churchyard survey results continue to attract new visitors to the site and are the most popular entry and exit page.

LARGE TURNOUT FOR TURNPIKES



Our largest audience yet came to the Methodist Hall on 8th March for the second in this season's BHTA series of open lectures when Adrian Henstock spoke on "Georgian Coaching Days: the Turnpike Roads of the Bingham and Newark area". Supplementing his talk with slides of contemporary illustrations and documents, he told us that, in common with the rest of the country, the roads in the Bingham and Newark areas were unsurfaced, rutted and muddy until the advent of numerous Turnpike Trusts in Georgian times. These bodies were set up by local dignitaries under local Acts of Parliament to repair and improve specific stretches of road between market towns. Their income was raised by charging tolls on users at tollgates or tollbars. The Nottingham to Grantham road through Bingham was adopted by one such trust in 1759, with one of its tollgates ('Thorough Bridge Bar') at the junction of the A52 with Granby Lane. Another trust took over the Fosse Way from Saxondale to Newark road in 1772, with a tollhouse ('Newton Spring Bar') at what is now Buggins Cottage at its junction with the old Chapel Lane.

1835 Bingham only had two coaches daily each way – the *Celerity* and the *Red Rover* which called at the Chesterfield Arms in Church Street - Grantham and Newark on the Great North Road had as many as fifteen. The larger coaching inns, such as the George at Grantham or the Kingston's Arms and the Saracens' Head at Newark, were busy and important establishments, with the latter having stabling for 65 horses in 1790.



Travel was slow, for example a summer excursion coach called *The British Queen* which took Nottingham people to the 'shore bathing houses' near Skegness in 1821 left Nottingham at 6.00 am. and arrived 12 hours later. It reached Bingham after 1½ hours, and the cost for that stage was 2s. 6d. for riding on the roof open to the elements or a high 4s.(shillings) for the luxury of sitting inside the coach.

The fastest passenger transport was provided by the 'stage' coaches travelling between major towns in a series of stages, when stops were made at inns to change horses.

Although by

Coaches had to share the roads with a variety of commercial traffic ranging from tradesmens' carts, farm and coal wagons and village carriers' vans to the heavy lumbering long distance carriers' wagons drawn by up to eight horses belonging to firms such as Pickfords. These vehicles paid higher tolls depending on the number of horses or the thickness of the wheels, broad wheels doing less damage to road surfaces.

Traffic increased greatly in volume in the early 1800s, and many towns, still with their narrow mediaeval streets, became very congested, enduring severe 'parking' and stabling problems on market days. A census carried out in Nottingham on one Saturday in 1819 showed that some 1,000 vehicles and 2,700 horses came into town in addition to no less than 12,000 pedestrians !

Road accidents were common, for example in 1810 when the *Cornwallis* coach overturned in Bingham Market Place, injuring several passengers, or in 1827 when one of the coach horses being changed outside the Chesterfield Arms ran away across the Market Place and smashed through a cottage door near Moor Lane when the family were having breakfast ! Roads weren't always safe from crime,



Turnpike milestone c.1830-40

as John Stafford, a well-known Bingham printer from East Street, discovered when returning home from Nottingham in 1813. He was set upon by a highwayman near Holme Pierrepont, 'but by resistance he prevented the villain from effecting his purpose'.

There is only space here to give a brief summary of Adrian's lecture which held his audience enthralled for over an hour which was then followed by a lively discussion. Finally, Peter Allen closed the meeting with a vote of thanks to Adrian for a fascinating evening to which the audience responded with enthusiastic applause.

150 YEARS AGO

Dismissed for marrying his late wife's sister!

On 3rd December 1857 the Board of Guardians met to elect a master and matron for Bingham Union Workhouse. Ten couples were interviewed and Thomas Roberts and his wife Emma were appointed. It was evident from the number of votes they received, that two thirds of the Board voted to appoint them. The Clerk to the Board was ordered to report the appointment to the Poor Law Board for their approval. When the Board of Guardians met a fortnight later, no approval had been received and the clerk was asked to write again. The



Stanhope House, built to house the Union Workhouse, was located where Stanhope Way meets the Nottingham Road. The building was demolished in 1964.

minutes of the meetings of the Guardians show that no further mention is made of the wait for approval, but on 28th January 1858, the Board received a letter of resignation from Mr and Mrs Roberts. The minutes do not record the reason for the resignation. That was left to the Nottingham Journal, which revealed on 29th January 1858 that Mr Roberts had been dismissed for marrying his late wife's sister. This was against the law as it was held that on marrying, a couple became as one and marrying a wife's sister would be incestuous. It was a controversial issue in the second half of the 19th century; people felt the law should be changed. It was, but not until 1907, which was too late for them. It would be interesting to know what happened to them. This story came out of Joyce Allen's research into the

newspaper archives when she was preparing for the third of this season's lecture series. We plan to report more fully on her lecture in the next issue of *Discovering Bingham*.

MORE LECTURES !

Over the past year talks on field walking were given by Peter Allen to Scarrington Friends of Cancer Research on 11th September and Nether Broughton Local History project on 8th November. Geoff Ashton and Joyce Allen also gave a talk on Victorian Bingham to Year 5 at Carnarvon School in December. This is likely to become an annual event.

10,000 HOURS PLUS

When the Local Heritage Initiative awarded BHTA the grant for the archaeological field-walking project the rules required us to put in voluntary effort (calculated at £50 per 7 hour day) to the value of 60% of the total cost of the project. This committed us to 5250 volunteer hours. So far we have put in **10,382 hours**, which is nearly twice the requirement. It is easy to see why projects of this kind are so rarely done; they can only be contemplated when there is a ready supply of enthusiastic amateurs. This is why community archaeology groups are so important. They exist throughout the country, mostly run by OAPs – another example of "grey power".

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With thanks to **Hammond Harwood** for their support by printing this issue of *Discovering Bingham*

Friday 8th June 2007

An evening tasting fine

New Zealand wines with

Jack Wilson in W.I.Hall

Tickets: £8 (incl. light food)

RING 831575