

DISCOVERING BINGHAM

Quarterly NEWSLETTER of the **Bingham Heritage Trails Association**
www.binghamheritage.org.uk Registered Charity No: 1090475 Issue No. 24 - June 2009

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

AN UGLY TOAD?

When introducing the second of the BHTA Lectures for 2009 our Chairman, Peter Allen hinted that we were in for something quite different to the lectures we had enjoyed in the past. They had, mainly, been about things, artefacts, objects which we could categorise, date and put on display. This lecture was to be about people who lived in and around Bingham in the late 16th and early 17th Centuries. People, as Peter described them, who were the 'Movers and Shakers' who had made the news, hit the headlines, had influence and whose actions affected others in this part of Nottinghamshire and elsewhere.

Our speakers, Beryl Cobbing and Pam Priestland took us through their research into the local politics in Elizabethan times, centred upon Shelford and Bingham but with repercussions which spread far and wide. They unravelled for us a farrago of political intrigue, in-family quarrels, across family disputes, physical violence, criminal damage and the corrupt use of kinship and Royal patronage. Even the flow of the mighty River Trent became confused and it was made to spill its waters.

Central to their story was the ambitious landowner Sir Thomas Stanhope of Shelford, circa 1540 - 1596 (*see above*) whose family was counted



amongst the wealthiest in Nottinghamshire. However his fame or notoriety spread well beyond this County both in terms of the quarrels 'en famille' and the blatantly aggressive ambition he displayed in the scramble for land, property and status that took place in post-Reformation England.

We were not told what his family motto might have been - but 'noblesse oblige' did not seem to be within his character and attitudes. By virtue of the strict and stern patriarchal stance he adopted with his family he was often at odds with his wife (the rich heiress Margaret Port of Etwall in Derbyshire) and his two sons - John and Edward.

As a magistrate he was a rigorous and fierce enforcer of anti-Catholic legislation to such an extent that he aroused the fears of the Crown and

the Privy Council that, in the situation when an invasion by the Spanish was constantly feared he might undermine the nation's stability and the status of the Protestant Church.

However it was in his public quarrels that his ambitions enraged his countrymen. Records from the Star Chamber and other Courts tell of his disputes with the Fletchers of Stoke Bardolph, the Willoughbys of Wollaton, the Zouches of Codnor and the Molyneux, Sacheverell, Kniveton and Markham families. In these and other matters he was often protected from what might have been his just deserts by turning to his advantage his distant kinship to the Chief Minister, Lord Burghley and the fact that two of his brothers were 'at Court' and had the ear of the Queen.

His most bitter foe was Gilbert Talbot, the 7th, Earl of Shrewsbury. It was the Earl's wife who claimed that Sir

Pam Priestland(L) and Beryl Cobbing taking questions during the lively discussion following their lecture.



Thomas's wickedness had caused him to become 'more ugly in shape than the ugliest toad in the world', and she hoped he would be 'damned perpetually in hell fire'. A major cause of this enmity involved what was known as the manor of Bingham. At that time Bingham was of considerable local importance as an administrative centre and it had a rural market and several fairs. It was near the junction of the Nottingham to Grantham road and the route from Newark to Leicester via the Roman Fosse Way. In addition it was not far from the River Trent. Bingham adjoined Sir Thomas's Shelford manor and he determined to acquire it. However the Earl of Shrewsbury also coveted Bingham and this was widely known. As Sir Thomas's superior the Earl would naturally have expected Sir Thomas to defer to him and offer him the manor instead. This Sir Thomas did not do and, indeed, thwarted the Earl's ambition and occupied the property himself. The Earl's fury, they say, knew no bounds. The climax of this quarrel came at Easter 1593 when the Earl's tenants and servants attacked Sir Thomas's weir on the River Trent near Shelford and Stoke Bardolph. It was this attack on Sir Thomas's property and the cost of putting things right that may have been his down fall, since he died just three years later heavily in debt.

We were left to decide for ourselves whether he was a victim or a villain but in the long run his family survived both him and his reputation. His grandson became the 1st Earl of Chesterfield - a title which gives the name to the Chesterfield Arms here in Church Street, Bingham.

BINGHAM SANITARY AUTHORITY 1872-1881

Our field walking exercise produced around 20,000 finds attributable to nightsoil - the material of privies and ashpit closets in the town - see Newsletter December 2008. We wanted to know how it got there, was there an organised collection service, how did the sanitary arrangements for the town work in Victorian times? So we read the minutes of the Sanitary Authority for 1872-1881. No other papers exist. The Public Health Act of 1872 set up Rural Sanitation Committees and required the appointment of a medical officer in each area, to be responsible for sanitation. The Bingham Authority was a sub group of the Board of Guardians. They appointed James Eaton (remembered by Eaton Place) as Medical Officer of Health and Edward Arnsby as Inspector of Nuisances- a forerunner of the modern Environmental Health officer. A nuisance was defined as anything likely to be injurious to public health. A number of these nuisances became continuing stories. Only rarely was the nuisance defined in the minutes.

Most unspecified nuisances seem to have been created by traders and were presumably related to what we now call trade waste. Amongst these were Stephen Hart, harness and saddle maker (he was prosecuted for non compliance), John Pacey and J Levers (farmers), Thomas Horsepool (butcher), John Goodwin (a fishmonger) and Charles Walker a (cordwainer or shoemaker) of East Street.

Some nuisances were concerned with ash pit closets. On 17th October 1872 the Inspector reported the

existence of an offensive ash pit on the premises belonging to Mr J Hareton on Long Acre Row. The inspector was ordered to give Mr Hareton 'the necessary notice to abate the nuisance'. Two weeks later Mr Hareton had not complied with the order and the inspector was ordered to take 'such legal proceedings in the matter as would compel the removal of such a nuisance'. By 14th November he was in the process of complying but not before magisterial proceedings had been taken against him!

On 14th November 1872 Mrs Hutchinson reported the 'filthy and neglected condition of the children of William Widdowson in Bingham. The clerk was directed to write to Widdowson thereon and to threaten proceedings (one has to wonder if Widdowson could read the letter when it arrived!). On 12th December Widdowson appeared before the Authority, admitted the neglected condition of the children and was allowed 14 days to take the children 'into his charge'. This he was reported on 26th December to have done. Widdowson was unemployed; both he and his wife Martha were aged 39 and lived in Chapel Yard, a slum on the corner of Newgate Street and Moor Lane. They had a 19 year old daughter Ellen and 5 other children aged between 11 months and 8 years. Life must have been hard.

The maintenance of the sewer network was the responsibility of the Authority. The minutes record the need to unblock, repair or occasionally replace particular sewers. Over the ten years of the minutes blocked sewers are recorded in just about every street in the town. In 1874 the Authority ordered that the open sewer

against the Wheatsheaf be covered in. In 1877 they declined to pay £14.0.0 to cover the sewer in Fairfield Street, but instead ordered that it should be cleaned out regularly. The Authority did buy and use chloride of lime as a disinfectant and in 1875 they arranged to install stench stops on a number of cess pits. Bingham seems to have been a bit smelly in these years!

Readers will know there was a pond in Fairfield Street, indeed it was once Pond Street. But forget any thought of trees, ducks and wild life – this pond was fed by a sewer. The Authority ordered that the sewer discharging into the pond should be diverted to connect with the main sewer but this did not solve the problem. Lord Carnarvon told the Authority he was willing to have pond filled in although there is no record of it having been filled in.

Defective or polluted wells were reported from time to time and their owners ordered either to clean them out or fill them in. It might have been that these were being polluted by foul run off from other nearby features uphill from the well such as sewers and drains. The polluted well reported at the Chesterfield Arms might have been a case in point. In 1881 the well at the Wesleyan chapel was reported as needing to be filled in immediately.

Most cases of typhoid fever seemed to be reported in the surrounding villages rather than Bingham itself. However some did occur in the town. In December 1873 a case was reported at the house of the Reavill family on Grantham Road. Disinfectant had been supplied to Reavill by 8th

January but on 5th February the MOH produced a certificate that a house on Grantham Road belonging to John Goodman and occupied by the Reavills required disinfecting "Typhoid Fever having existed therein". Maybe Reavill had not used the disinfectant or maybe it had not been successful first time. Reavill was ordered to disinfect within 7 days. On 19th February it was reported the landlord had done the work.

In 1880 Mrs Spencer in Market Street died of Typhoid Fever. It was noted that the wall of the house formed part of the privy, the pit was below the foundation and offensive smells arose. Notice was served on the owner, Mrs Catherine White to remove the privy and abate the nuisance. Mr Hutchinson inspected on behalf of the committee and reported that the ash pit should be dosed and replaced with moveable tubs.

In 1880 the Authority noted that several lodging houses in Bingham were not registered according to law. Alice Randall of Pinfold Lane Bingham was reported as being in the habit of using her cottage as a common lodging house without being registered. The MOH visited the cottage and reported the rooms were too small and her application for registration was rejected.

So there we have it, the beginning of the involvement of the state in our health. The sanitary committee grew into the Bingham Rural District Council and gradually took on the roles we now associate with a local Authority. Whatever our problems are now, one might suppose Bingham is a bit healthier now than it could possibly have been in the 1870s.

ORAL HISTORIES

(Thanks to Dot Mabbott for pointing out that the doctor referred to in the interview with Connie Jones in the last issue in March '09 as 'Dr Ward' was in fact 'Dr Wade'. Ed.)

Now, continuing this series, here are extracts from the interview with **Phil Jacques** who wasn't born in Bingham.

He came here as a very young child with his family in the 1930's

when his father, the manager of a building firm, came to oversee the building of the Carnarvon Housing Estate. When he was old enough, he went first to the Robert Miles Infant School in School Lane, with teachers, Miss Sides, of whom he has especially fond memories, and Miss Cooper, then later on to the old Church School which we now know as Church House where he was taught for the most part by Mr Collins, though he does remember both Mr (Peggy) Day, and of course, Adelaide Wortley, who made him stand in the corner on more than one occasion. Another punishment that the children at the Church School were made to undergo from time to time, was to be sent to work in the school gardens, a much more productive and pleasant form of punishment, and rather more of an encouragement to be naughty!

From school, Phil went to the Arts School in Nottingham, and later served a six-year apprenticeship as a compositor designing



amongst other things advertising poster work for the film industry.

He remembers that winters were far worse when he was a lad. The Banks had no footpaths, and was a real country lane with manure left by the cows on their way down to be milked. At this time there were about 1500 people in the town, and as Phil says, 'everyone knew you - not always a good thing particularly when you are a child'. From his back garden he could go straight out onto the fields for sledging in the 'hollow', or to the many orchards that Bingham boasted at that time.

In spite of having enjoyed his time in the arts and design side of compositing, in 1957 Phil was persuaded to join the building company his father had started and became the Company Secretary. In 1984 he set up his own Company - Sercon Building Supplies which he still runs with one of his three children. For a time, as a sideline, he was correspondent for the Grantham Journal, though he freely admits that he relied on his wife to a large extent, to keep him abreast of all the local news.

He has always taken a great interest in ToCh, and feels that it had a great influence for good on the community of Bingham, where it worked for both the young and the old. Of course much of its work was in raising funds to fight cancer

and leprosy, but he was also involved in the work it did for the Lowdham Borstal. He extended this interest when he became Chairman of the Board of Directors of Whatton Detention Centre and a Prison Visitor.

Phil has played a full part in helping to run Bingham. He was elected to the Parish Council in 1967 and was Chairman from 1973 to 1975. When Bingham became a Township in 1975 Phil was elected the first Town Mayor from '75 to '77 and then again in 1983 and 1986.

Another interest of his was with the Twinning Association between Bingham and Wallenfels. As he says, there were many German dead in those battlefields too. In war no one wins.

MORE FROM THE NEWSPAPER ARCHIVES

From the London Gazette, June 4th 1796

His Majesty has been graciously pleased to grant unto John Strong, the Younger, of Bingham in the County of Nottingham, Plumber, his ROYAL LETTERS PATENT, bearing Date at Westminster the 31st of May inst, for his Invention of certain new Improvements in the Construction of PISTON CYLINDERS, SUCTION CHAMBERS, and VALVES, whereby the same may be more expeditiously repaired etc.

John Strong begs Leave to return his sincere Thanks to

his numerous Friends, for the many favours he has already received at their Hands, and hopes by his Assiduity and Attention to merit their future Patronage: he hopes their Goodness will excuse his late Inattention to Business, which maybe attributed to the indispensable Necessity he was under of attending in London, for several weeks to obtain his Patent.

The above John Strong having received several orders for PUMPS, upon his new Principle, in London and in the country, he is in immediate want of three or four journeymen PLUMBERS - none need apply but men of experienced Abilities.

From Creswell's Nottingham Journal, 31st March 1787.

Blind Horse Bolts in Grantham

Last Friday in Grantham, a boy was riding a blind pony belonging to Mr Tinkler of the Granby's Head in Bingham, when the pony was struck by a whip. It bolted down Westgate, butted its head against a house door forcing it open and galloped into a room where four elderly matrons were sitting gossiping and drinking their Lapsang Suchong Tea. Horror and Dismay were lively depicted on the countenances of the Ladies, whilst Devastation and total Destruction marked the imperious footsteps of the new Guest. The Carpet strewn with shattered Fragments, intermixed with Sugar, Cream etc. exhibited a scene more easily imagined than described. The Poor Boy who rode the Pony had his legs terribly lacerated against the sides of the Door and was thrown down with such Violence as leaves but vain hope for his Recovery.

BHTA CONTACTS

General e-mail: bhta@binghamheritage.org.uk

CHAIRMAN: Peter Allen - 01949 831575

VICE CHAIRMAN: Geoff Ashton - 01949 875177

SECRETARY: Jack Wilson - 01949 838275

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Robin Aldworth - 01949 839991

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