

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

EXHIBITION AND TALKS AT BINGHAM LIBRARY

by Hilary Strasburger
Rushcliffe District Library
Manager

One of the aims of the Nottinghamshire County Council Libraries, Archives and Information Service is to create knowledge through access to learning, information and the provision of a continuing record of local heritage and community life. Another is to stimulate and encourage cultural activities.

These have linked brilliantly with BHTA's exhibition "A History of Bingham in 100 objects". We have been delighted to have this on display in the library, and it has been great to see people coming in to have a look. Some come in one day to concentrate on one section, and return another to pick up where they left off. The very professional production and the amount of information the exhibition contains have been commented on more than once. The exhibition will be on display until the end of August so do make time to take it all in.

We have continued with the local history theme by arranging a series of three talks. In the first of these in May our local Finds Liaison Officer from the Portable Antiquities Scheme talked about "Medieval Nottinghamshire".



*On 11th March our Vice Chairman Geoff Ashton and Margaret Sibley **get down** to installing the exhibition display that covers most of the back wall of the library. Later the same day the official public opening ceremony was held with (l. to r.) Hilary Strasburger - Library Manager, Joan Bray - Lottery Heritage Fund and Peter Allen BHTA Chairman conducting the formalities after which the audience had their first chance to view the exhibits.*



This will be followed by BHTA members talking about "Life in Bingham in 1776" at 2pm on **Thursday 17th June**. At 2pm on **Thursday 15th July** Val Henstock will introduce listeners to the history of the

local area in a talk entitled "A Ramble round the Vale of Belvoir". Numbers are limited so, if you are interested in coming along, make sure you get a free ticket from the library. (01949 837905)

LHF KEPT THINKING IT WAS ALL OVER!! Well it is now!!!

Our AGM for 2010 will be held on the 1st. July and the Agenda will be sent out around the middle of June. One of the items on the Agenda will be something we haven't seen since 2004. The AGM held on the 30th. June, that year reported to Members the success of the completion and publication of the full set of the BHTA leaflets, which have continued to be in such great demand; on the success of the Public Lectures which had been so well attended, on the interest shown in the regular and wide distribution of 400 copies of the BHTA Newsletter to both Members and non-Members and on the growing attention being paid to our Website. The final item on the Agenda was '**An Open Discussion on future activities**'.

As reported in the September 2004 BHTA Newsletter there was no shortage of ideas for the future programme. In the end it was decided to go for a big project – **The History of Settlement in Bingham**. This has turned out to be a great success with a superb exhibition of field walking finds and maps, a much extended web site, a collection of some 50,000 artefacts to be housed at Nottingham University's Department of Archaeology and a permanent record in an outstanding book – 'Bingham Back in Time'

Of course we needed some money, so we put a detailed

plan to the Lottery Heritage Fund asking for financial support. We claimed we would complete it all in three years! In December 2004 the Newsletter announced that LHF had granted us £24,651, with one major condition. We had to provide 3400 hours of voluntary effort, to be costed at £7 an hour to match the £24,651 grant. **From then on it has been all go!**

OK it has taken us six years instead of three. We clocked up over 6000 hours of voluntary labour! **But now it is all over!!** It wasn't that we bit off more than we could chew - it was just that, like Topsy in Uncle Tom's Cabin, the Project just grew and grew and, to mix our metaphors, it took longer for us to digest all the data we were collecting than we thought it would. However the LHF were very tolerant and, indeed, supportive of our growing ambitions. We did all we said we would do and more. We can be delighted and proud of the high standard we have achieved. Others have nothing but praise for what we have done.

Now we have to start all over again. The AGM Agenda for 1st July will shortly be distributed to BHTA members. Look out for the item - '**An Open Discussion on future activities**'. Do be sure to come along to the meeting and bring your ideas! We would also welcome ideas from our non-Member readers too, who can sit-in and observe the formal items on the agenda.

SPREADING THE WORD

Now that the main research work of BHTA's History of Settlement project is complete we are into the next phase of telling the inhabitants of Bingham what we have discovered through the staging of an exhibition and the publication of our book *Bingham, Back in Time*. However as some of our working methods were ground breaking we feel we should broadcast them to the wider world. Several talks have already been given to local history societies in the area, but recently our project was 'showcased' to two learned bodies within our region.

On 27th March the East Midland branch of the national body, the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) met at Lowdham Village Hall, the event being hosted by BHTA and the Lowdham Local Historical Society. The day took the form of reports on amateur and professional archaeological work from across the region, and Peter Allen, Geoff Ashton, and Adrian Henstock each had 20-minute slots to talk about our field walking, the historical maps reconstruction and the Crow Close survey respectively.

A month later on 24th April BHTA was invited to take part in a visit of the Thoroton Society to Bingham. This is Nottinghamshire's most prestigious historical and archaeological society, founded in 1897 and named in honour of the first historian of the county, Dr Robert Thoroton, a physician from Car Colston who published his



Above - Daryl Garton, Secretary of the East Midlands branch of the Council of British Archaeology, briefs the BHTA speakers, Peter Allen, Adrian Henstock and Geoff Ashton, before their presentations at the Lowdham meeting. Below, one month later, there was a full house for the Thoroton Society AGM in Bingham where again our members gave presentations.



Antiquities of Nottinghamshire in 1677. The Society holds its AGM in a different area of the county each year, and this year some 90 members met in Bingham's Methodist church hall. In his welcome address as a Vice President of the Society Adrian briefly outlined the history of Bingham and of our recent project, and after the business meeting Peter and Geoff reprised their talks to the CBA on field walking and the historical maps. Following tea Geoff, Adrian and Val Henstock led guided

walks around the town, ending up in the church where the Rev David Harper spoke about its history.

Both events produced many favourable comments from their audiences, most of them about both the ambitious scope and originality of the BHTA project. Thoroton Society chairman Professor John Beckett described its event as a 'splendid day' and was particularly impressed by the reconstruction work on the maps.

THE ROMAN WELL Progress report, of a sort...

Readers will know we have rescued a Roman well uncovered during the excavations in connection with the A46 project. The stones are currently securely stored in a member's garage. The Nottinghamshire County Council - Rushcliffe Members' Forum has given us a substantial grant towards the costs of reconstructing it in the town. All we need is a site and planning permission. Bingham Town Council supports the plan and has no objections to it being sited on any of their land; the problem is that the sites they own are not really very central to the town and would not maximise the number of people likely to view the well.

We had a productive meeting with the Rushcliffe Planning Department which is generally supportive. However, they would not support a proposal to site the well within an area that already has inherent heritage value, such as the Market Place. A reconstructed artefact from the Roman period, clearly not in its rightful place, would compromise the 18th and 19th century context. They have advised us not to go out to public consultation until we have land owners' agreement to using the other preferred sites. NCC owns a central site without heritage problems that has a heavy pedestrian flow and is currently considering whether they would be happy for us to use it. Toothill School has already turned down the use of the entrance area on The Banks.

Meanwhile, we need to find people with skills we could use. Any designers, draftspersons, dry stone wallers, builders etc who would like to help are invited to get in touch with us...

BHTA's BOOK HAS ARRIVED - AT LAST!

When our March newsletter was issued we expected to have our book, 'Bingham, Back in Time' ready for sale by April but as it turned out the final page proofing and proof reading took much longer than we expected. We apologise to our readers for what has turned out to be a rather premature announcement.

We hope you find that the wait was worthwhile as our book is now really here and was launched on May 21st as the above pictures prove. Copies are now on sale for £12.50 at the Bingham Library, the Newsagent in Eaton Place or direct from BHTA at 19, Church Street or place an order by calling any of the contact numbers below.

The evening of the book launch started with Chairman Peter Allen welcoming a large invited audience of over sixty which in addition to BHTA members included County Councillor Martin Suthers, the Town Mayor, Maureen Stockwood with several Town Councillors and many of the specialists who have assisted us during the six years of our project.

Peter then handed over to Dr. David Knight, Head of Research, Trent & Peak Archaeology who had contributed the Foreword to the book and had provided advice and guidance from the inception of the field walking project. He congratulated the association in producing such



Just as you would expect at any book launch the authors are on hand to sign copies for the punters who are seen casting a critical glance at the contents as they wait in the queue.



a comprehensive report on their outstanding achievement and for providing a fully annotated archive of finds to be kept at the University of Nottingham Museum as a valuable research resource.

It then fell to Joan Bray of the Lottery Heritage Fund to formally declare the book 'launched'. She praised everyone involved in producing a very readable and well illustrated publication. She had been particularly struck when she had read that the field walking team had covered over 2,400 km clocking up 5,000 volunteer 'man' hours. It was this kind of public involvement the LHI wished to encourage.

Robin Aldworth, who designed the layout, then gave a brief illustrated overview of the new publication, ending by inviting everyone to enjoy the wine, nibbles, chat and, of course to buy their copy of the book!

EXHIBITION - A HISTORY OF BINGHAM IN 100 OBJECTS

(with NO apologies to BBC Radio 4!)

This is the theme of the free BHTA exhibition that can be viewed during the usual opening hours at the Bingham Library until the end of August.

Come and see 400,000 year-old flint tools, Civil War cannon balls, ancient coins, Victorian toys and much more all found in the fields of the parish. The display also includes maps and photographs telling the fascinating story of life in Bingham over many past centuries.

NOT TO BE MISSED!

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