

DISCOVERING BINGHAM

Quarterly NEWSLETTER of the **Bingham Heritage Trails Association**
www.binghamheritage.org.uk Registered Charity No: 1090475 Issue No.63 - June 2019

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

BHTA at the cross roads

Over the 20 years of its existence, Bingham Heritage Trails Association has developed a considerable reputation within the local community, and indeed the wider regional and national archaeological world, and has organised a number of important heritage related activities on behalf of the town.

BHTA was formed in the year 2000 with the objective of researching Bingham's history and making the story of Bingham widely available. Our "mission statement" set out our basic aim as being to raise the level of public awareness of Bingham's heritage. The plan was always to do this through publicising our research on our web site, by publishing walking trails, leaflets and books where appropriate and by giving talks to interested groups. For the last 15 years this has included sponsoring three free lectures a year. Mostly these have been about Bingham but occasionally we have spread the net a little further. We never intended to become a "meetings group". The Bingham Local History Society, which grew out of research by two adult education classes, was already performing that role.

We have always been able to maintain an Executive Committee to direct operations and whose members have undertaken much of the project work involved and delivered most of the lectures. We have completed two

major archaeological field-walking and excavation projects employing very many people "on the ground". We also completed the survey of the churchyard, carried out an oral history project, a number of house history projects and the investigation of Bingham's involvement in World War One. A similar project for WW2 is underway. We researched and produced exhibitions celebrating the 700th anniversary of Bingham's Market Charter and the 150th anniversary of the iconic Buttercross, both centred on our annual displays for the Summer Fair. We have worked closely with the local schools on some projects. Along the way we have collected a lot of "background" information which helps inform other activities and in answering the frequent enquiries we get through the web site. We occasionally lead guided heritage walks around the town.

BHTA is now at the crossroads for two main reasons:

1. Although we have achieved some turnover of active members involving themselves in project work, our age profile is against us. We desperately need an injection of new blood, to find new areas of research and new stories of Bingham's heritage to tell as well as to maintain the knowledge bank we already have.
2. We need to identify new areas of

research that will sufficiently interest and engage newly active recruits to continue our ambition of being a pro-active research group.

There are things to be done.

- The World War Two project has just started and will require more than the two people currently working on it to explore the whole story. 2020 will be the 75th anniversary of the end of that war.
- The display of the restored underground medieval oven at 11a Market Place needs to be completed.
- The photo archive needs to be brought into the modern world of a cloud based information resource.
- The newspaper archive needs to be transfer onto the website.
- Past research has identified several small archaeological sites within the parish that should be investigated by excavation.
- The 19th and 20th century development of Bingham offers the prospect of stimulating research to anyone with an interest.

If new blood is not forthcoming, then it seems likely that once the WWII work is completed and unless we find people interested in taking the archaeology forward and indeed interested in safeguarding our current knowledge, BHTA will die. This would be a great shame, especially when the town is on the brink of considerable population expansion with new audiences looking to learn about the history of their new home.

If you would like to get involved by

suggesting new projects which you could lead or becoming more involved with the running of BHTA then please contact David Mason or Geoff Ashton. Contact telephone numbers and email address are on page 4.



World War II research project

With several World War 2 anniversaries in prospect, BHTA has launched a project to research Bingham's part in the conflict. Our starting point has been the eleven names listed on the 1939-1945 Roll of Honour in the parish church, with the aim finding out as much as we can about them and their part in the war.

One challenge has been to trace the connections to Bingham of some of those listed. A case in point is Private 1st Class James McGeorge of the USAAF. It seems that he married a Bingham woman in 1945, presumably whilst stationed at one of the local RAF stations. Tragically he died, five months later, in an accident whilst serving in the occupation forces in Germany. Poignantly his wife gave birth to a son, whom she named after him, almost exactly a year after the date of their wedding.

We have also discovered that there is an additional WW2 soldier buried in the town cemetery. Gunner Lewis Mead was serving with a light anti-aircraft battery at Whatton and died in a road accident in Bingham in 1940. We believe he originally came from Nottingham, though his birthplace is proving difficult to establish. Perhaps his only connection to Bingham is that he lost his life here.

Because individual WW2 service records are not straightforward to access, it is helpful to have information from family members. At present we have only a few such informants and would be very grateful to hear from anyone else who may have relevant knowledge. We are particularly keen to learn more about Signalman Herbert Davis. We know he hailed from Bingham and died here in March 1945. He is buried in a family plot in the town cemetery, along with his father and mother.

Please contact David Mason on 01949 876635 or email us via the BHTA website if you can help.

2019 Public Lectures series

During spring we ran our well established series of free public lectures.

In March Peter Allen spoke on **Flints to Flagons**. Peter used the results of the field walking and test pitting projects done by BHTA to show that everything now known about our early history came out of this work. The first sign of human occupation came from a flint scraper that is older than 250,000 years. Since then, ice ages made Great Britain uninhabitable and people only returned here 12,500 years ago. These hunter-gatherers were replaced by new

settlers who brought farming and cattle around 6,000 years ago. Then the Beaker People arrived here about 3,000 years ago and changed the pattern of settlement forming five scattered settlements.

Archaeological research done before building the new A46 showed that Margidunum was the administrative centre controlling trade in produce from Roman estates all around the town. The five British settlement sites survived the Roman occupation and it was to these that the local people returned when the Roman economy collapsed in the late 4th C.

Four of these sites endured until the 9th C when three of them disappeared. Bingham survived because it had a good quality water supply, but it also may have been a British sacred site. Open field farming probably came to Bingham and commercial farming replaced local self-sufficiency at this time.

Geophysical work and test pits dug in Warner's Paddock showed that this had probably been the village centre in Late Saxon times. In the 13th C the first lord of the manor came to live in the village and the centre shifted to where the market place now is. It was here that BHTA found the site of the medieval manor house and uncovered the oldest recorded gypsum plaster and lime floor in England.

From here on we have documented evidence and there are even carved effigies of Sir Richard de Bingham and his wife Lady Alice on the church tower. However, it was calculations made on the abundance of different types of find in the test pits that suggested a mortality here of about 40% during the Black Death. The distribution of Midland Yellow Ware collected while field walking showed that Thomas Stanhope, the

first of the earls of Chesterfield to own the parish, probably illegally enclosed the southern half of the East open field to graze sheep on it in the late 16th C. The impact that this had on the village was shown by the map of East Field constructed by BHTA, in which each individual strip was shown. Every villager would have lost some of the land they cultivated.

In April we spread our wings outside Bingham and enjoyed a fascinating presentation by Ellis Morgan on the work of Southwell Community Archaeology Group. The scale of Roman remains in the town surprised many in the audience. A substantial Roman Villa was found on the site of the old Minster School, with mosaic floors and much foundation stonework. Elis went on to talk about some of the work the group has done on dating many of the old houses in the town. Several Tudor timber framed houses have been revealed, some with Georgian false fronts introduced to fill the space under originally overhanging jetties.

The group's work on the Burgage Green and with test pits in gardens is a long term project and has revealed much evidence of the medieval development of this part of

Southwell. Ellis explained the development of Southwell as a game of two halves. The area around the Minster is largely occupied by large Georgian Prebendary houses while the Burgage area, under the separate governance of the Archbishops of York, was the focus of medieval and later secular life.

In May Geoff Ashton completed the programme of three lectures with a talk entitled "Inside Bingham". Geoff stated off by defining "Inside" as, following Humpty Dumpty, meaning anything I want it to mean at different times in the talk! Geoff took us on a tour of old Bingham but looking at the old buildings from the inside and not spending much time of the building histories. Sometimes it might be interesting internal features, like the butler's pantry at 2 Long Acre or the cells at the old courthouse. In other cases we learned something of the families who lived in the houses. We learned of the ordered but probably happy children's lives at Dr Smyth's house, the intense religious household of Abraham Kaye, and the unfortunate histories of families at the Old Post Office. Geoff rounded off the talk by bringing us up to date with the history of the underground medieval bake house at 11a Market Place.

BHTA CONTACTS

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

 www.facebook.com/binghamheritage

CHAIRMAN: Geoff Ashton - 01949 875177

SECRETARY: David Mason - 01949 876635

NEWSLETTER EDITOR :

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