

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

COUNCILLORS HONOUR BHTA



BHTA committee members with Bingham's Town Mayor and the Special Award. From left to right: Jack Wilson, Geoff Ashton, Joyce Allen, Councillor John Eagles (Town Mayor), Peter Allen (Chairman BHTA) and Hilda Smith.

At a Civic Reception held in the Council Chamber of the Old Court House on the 4th. February, the Town Mayor, Councillor John Eagles presented a 'Special Award' to the Association. He explained that, in addition to the awards to individual Bingham residents for their services to the Community, the Council had decided, on this occasion, to make an award to BHTA. The citation reads: "In recognition of the unique contribution made to the community of Bingham by Bingham Heritage Trails Association. This 4th day of February 2006 signed by John D Eagles, Town Mayor and Jacqui M Marshall, Deputy Town Mayor."

Peter Allen, BHTA Chairman, in accepting the award, gave full credit to Hilda Smith for making the initial moves towards the Association's formation. He said that, "with the establishment of the Local Heritage Initiative in 1999 to fund the sort of work the BHTA wanted to do, her idea had found its time." He also thanked the BHTA Committee and Members for all their hard work and enthusiasm. It was also due to the generous financial support received from the Lottery Heritage Initiative, the Town Council, Bingham United Charities, Bingham Local Area Forum, NCC: Rushcliffe Members Forum, Awards for All and several Bingham businesses that BHTA was in a position to receive such an award.

2006 SEASON BHTA FREE PUBLIC LECTURES

Sponsored by NCC
Rushcliffe Members Forum

Lectures will all be held on
Thursday evenings at 7.30pm.
in the Methodist Church Hall.

23rd March - Hilda Smith
Bingham -
Yesterday & Today

25th May - Geoff Ashton
Beneath.....that
Yew Tree's Shade

NOTE: These dates have
changed from those shown
in the last newsletter.

RECENT ARCHAEOLOGY AROUND BINGHAM

Gavin Kinsley and Laurence Platt from the Trent and Peak Archaeological Unit gave the first of the Bingham Heritage Trails winter lectures on 2nd February at the Methodist Hall, telling an attentive audience about recent archaeological finds around Bingham. As usual, the lecture was well attended, and began with Laurence Platt describing the recent find of an Iron Age (800BC to 43AD) site at Whatton. The discovery of the site was made possible due to the recent extension of Whatton prison.

To investigate the site, on a higher part of the area near



the A52, thirteen test trenches were dug some of which revealed Iron Age features believed to date from between 500 and 100 BC. There is evidence of an enclosed landscape, the ditches and pit alignments showing a development linked with population growth. The pottery found was typical of the East Midlands area, and made of local material. There was also bone evidence of cattle and horses. Poor preservation may account for the lack of sheep and pig bone. No human bone was found. There were small pieces of slag as possible evidence of smelting, but no metal artefacts were found which, strangely, is not unusual for Iron Age sites!

In conclusion, he suggested that it may have been a small settlement, similar to other sites in the Trent valley, or that the main focus of what may have been a larger settlement, has yet to be located. It is also the first site to be discovered in an area of clay. This is leading to a re-think of Iron Age settlement in the area.

Gavin Kinsley then described recent finds on the site of the Roman town at Margidunum, impetus having been given to further investigation by the latest proposed widening of the A46. The Highways Department need to know where the archaeology is located, in order to design a



route that avoids these important sites. By using various methods such as field walking, geophysics and building on discoveries made during earlier excavations by Oswald and Todd, further intriguing information has been gained for this area of the Fosse Way.

Over 95% of the finds made were Roman and show evidence of a linear development which extends for 1.5 km, disappearing on the Saxondale side, where geology suggests there was once a marsh or lake, and on the East Bridgford side, where it was not possible to investigate further. On the East Bridgford map of 1612 the present A6097 is named 'Street' Way: this is a Saxon word used to refer to Roman roads and is probably a link from Margidunum to a Trent crossing at Gunthorpe. Near to where this road leaves the Fosse there is evidence of a stone building and a further exciting find was that of a Villa, set back from the road on higher ground. Field walking gave evidence of roof tiles, fired ceramics from floors and hypocaust, clusters of pottery, plaster fragments and tesserae. It would appear to be a large villa, possibly as large as that at Fishbourne. Although not as grand, it had a courtyard of similar size. The complex also includes what appear to be high status buildings, set next to a pool, which could be a temple.

Thanking the two speakers, Peter Allen, Chairman of BHTA, pointed out that, from all we had learned from the lectures, it was clear how important field walking was as a means of investigating the past and took the opportunity to invite more people to volunteer three hours of their time to continue the extensive field walking programme that BHTA have undertaken.

A BLAST FROM THE PAST

'There are constant claims on the custodians of ancient buildings.... confronted with the necessity of immediately raising [funds] for carrying out urgently required works...the fabric fund is more than exhausted...' These pleas sound very familiar at a time when our Parish Church is fundraising for urgent restoration work but these quotes, as hinted at by the rather quaint English, are taken from the programme for a Bazaar and Fête held at Bingham in June 1901. The 'Fore Words' [sic] of this 68 page booklet mention that *'the capstone of the spire is dislodged – jamming the Weathercock. The whole Tower requires re-pointing. The Organ has become practically unusable. A debt has been incurred for repairing the heating apparatus and rebuilding a fallen portion of the Churchyard wall.'*

This led to the decision to hold a 'Grand Fancy Bazaar and Midsummer Fête' in the extensive grounds of the Rectory which is now the site of Robert Miles Junior School. On the strength of this, *'The works absolutely necessary (to the Spire and the Organ)*



1901 Fete programme

were therefore carried out, and most successfully completed'. The programme lists over 150 volunteers who agreed to run 14 stalls, in addition there was a Refreshment stall and Al Fresco Café, a Shooting Range, Donkey rides and 'Cocoa Nut Shies' [sic] in the Nut Walk. To this number must be added the members of the Bingham String and Prize Brass Bands who also offered their services for no charge. The drawing room and the laundry of the Rectory were converted into theatres for the presentation of dramatic and musical entertainment. In the Great Tithe Barn (demolished in the 1950s) was the 'Grand Cinematograph' with a Limelight Magic Lantern show and Mr. Temple's ciné films, 'with the latest improvement to prevent flickering', showing the *Funeral of Queen Victoria* and *How the Boers are Vanquished*. Gripping stuff!

Among the many fascinating snippets of information contained in the programme are that the event was run over two days, Wednesday 26th and Thursday 27th June, presumably indicating that the majority of Binghamites worked locally and could attend mid-week. However, visitors from farther afield

were also expected as the Great Northern Railway offered cheap return fares from Nottingham and Grantham and the 11.5 pm. from Grantham stopped specially at Bingham station on these evenings to carry the revellers home to Radcliffe and Nottingham.

Although photocopies of extracts from the programme have been available in the library for some time, it is only recently that we have been loaned a complete, original booklet. This will be used as a source for further research into life in the town at the turn of the 19th century. Apart from providing details of the fundraising activities, it also includes advertisements of almost 50 traders who served the community at the start of the 20th century.

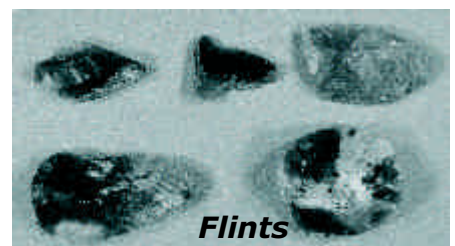
Please search your attics

There is another interesting possibility; the box camera had just become available allowing the man in the street to take photographs. If any readers have pictures of this, or other events, taken by their relatives around 100 years ago, or own copies of the Parish Magazine of this period, we would love to hear from them.

(For contacts see page 4)

FINDS GLORIOUS FINDS!!!

We have now had reports on the finds from last winter's field walking from several experts. They make fascinating reading. Take the flints, for example. Most of us can just about recognise a manmade flint, but the experts look at these little bits of stone and can tell whether they were flaked off a flint pebble by an antler or another piece of stone. They



Flints

can tell if they have been used to make fire with and in some cases they can tell pretty accurately how old they are. Most of what we have found is from late Neolithic to early Bronze Age; that is about 2000 BC, but there is one field where four flint blades are thought to be from the late Mesolithic to early Neolithic, which is around 4000 BC. At that time the field they were found in was marsh. It makes you wonder if these blades were lost while cutting reeds.

We are not sure what the oldest pottery we have found is. Surprisingly, it is quite difficult to tell the difference between Iron Age and early Saxon pottery. We have several sherds that could be either and we have to consult another specialist to be sure which. Whatever, it is very unusual to find pottery of these ages, which shows how sharp-eyed our field walkers are.

Most of the Roman pots were locally made domestic ware, ranging in age from the 1st to late 4th centuries. There were some imported from Gaul and bits of amphorae that had been used to carry olive oil from Spain. We have also found some Parisian ware, but don't be fooled by the name, the Parisi were the people who lived in Yorkshire at that time. The pots probably came from Doncaster. One odd find was a bit of Swithland slate, probably used for roofing. This is the same rock that was used for over half of the gravestones in the churchyard and shows how ancient the tradition of slate quarrying is in Charnwood Forest.

Stamford ware was the first medieval glazed ware produced in England in the tenth century. The pots were often white with a pale green to yellow glaze. Several bits

of this have been picked up and one of them is a rather pretty pot rim decorated with diamond impressions.

In Medieval times Nottingham was an important centre for pottery and sherds of 13th and 14th century Nottingham green glaze are numerous in the fields around Bingham. A lot of them were from jugs and it is not uncommon to find pieces of inch-wide jug handles.



Cistercian ware

It is always exciting to find clay pipe bowls, especially the small, bulbous, early 17th century ones, but most people's favourite find is 18th

century Staffordshire slipware. The bits we find are usually from shallow dishes with a variety of patterns produced by combing or feathering brown slip onto a white base.



Slipware

There are lots of stories in these finds, each one revealing a little more about the history of the parish. We cannot see the big picture yet, but the work done so far gives us good reason to believe that it will be full of colour and interest.

There is still time to join our field walking or find washing teams if you are keen to be part of our fascinating search for information into the history of Settlement in Bingham. If you can spare three hours a week, please get in touch.

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OUT!**

Thank you to all our
customers for their
support

**BHTA Power Point
Projector and Display
Boards**

Subject to availability, we are happy to consider loaning our equipment to local charitable organisations. Please contact our Chairman for details.