

DISCOVERING BINGHAM

Quarterly NEWSLETTER of the **Bingham Heritage Trails Association**
www.binghamheritage.org.uk Registered Charity No: 1090475 Issue No. 19 - March 2008

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

A FRANTIC 2008

At a committee meeting in January we carried out a review to decide what we are aiming to produce by the end of our project in November 2008. We were committed to a number of items in our project proposal to the Lottery, but three years have elapsed and we felt we needed to see if they were still appropriate. They all were. The biggest item will be the field walking project archive, which we will produce in limited numbers to be used solely as a reference work. It will contain a detailed account of the project including field-by-field descriptions of everything we have found, descriptions of all the different types of potsherds, clay pipes and flints and so on and, importantly, an interpretation of what we think it all means. There will also be archive reports covering the work on old maps and Crow Close. These will form the basis for a printed book, in which we hope to present a concise account of the history of settlement in Bingham parish from the Palaeolithic to the present. When these are done we will put a lot of what we have learned on the BHTA web site.

We plan to make a temporary display of finds in the library so that everyone has a chance to see what we have found. The disposal of finds presents something of a problem. Some are good enough to go to a museum and we will



20th November 2007 (above) the field walkers line up on the final stint. In January 2008 the team came together, with some of the 52,227 finds on display, to celebrate in style.



pursue this, but there are 52,227 of them altogether and a lot will be left over. We like the idea of making up collections of potsherds and flints for schools in the neighbourhood, but we need some help from a teacher to tell us if such a thing would be welcomed and used, and how to do it. If there are any teachers reading this please make contact. We need you.

We still like the idea of using the finds that are left over to make a mosaic to adorn a public wall in Bingham. We have even had an artist approach us to do it. But which wall: the proposed new

Methodist Hall, the proposed Bingham Community Hall, the outside wall to Country Carpets in Eaton Place? We do need some ideas. This time, instead of reading this and putting it away please contact us. All the contact details are on the back page.

CROW CLOSE

One of the most intriguing historical problems in Bingham is to find the answer to the question why the medieval village in Crow Close became deserted. The owners, the Southwell diocese, and English Heritage have given us permission to survey it and

carry out geophysical investigations. The topographical survey was done in March 2005 by **3D Laser Mapping Ltd**, a Bingham-based company who kindly did it for free. The results were astounding, as you can see below, and this



map has allowed us to plan a geophysical survey for this spring. You can see the boundary ditches to fields, the ridge and furrow in the arable fields, the old road, the village green and several sites of old buildings. There has been speculation that there was a manor house on this site; also that St James's church was here before St Mary's was built in 1225. There are at least a dozen possible explanations for the desertion. They include depopulation after one of the plagues, gradual decline after the village around the new church prospered, enforced evacuation after enclosure in 1690 and floods in 1316-1319 which made the place unpleasant to live in. We don't expect our work to give an answer to this question, but we are hoping that we will get a pointer in the right direction.

WHEN IS A FIELD NOT A FIELD ...?

We are turning our attention to research into local historical documents using copies of originals held by Nottinghamshire Archives. We are focusing on three major maps and related documents which throw light on the topographical layout of the buildings, roads and farmland of Bingham in the past.

The first of these is the *Tithe Map and Survey of 1841-42*, which includes detailed maps of the parish with a written survey giving details of the owners and tenants of all the property. The second is a descriptive *Survey Book of the Earl of Chesterfield* (who owned about 90% of Bingham!) of 1776, which lists individual holdings, many accompanied by small sketch maps of their location. The greatest challenge is a long and detailed *Survey Book of the estates of Sir Brian Stapleton* (an earlier lord of the manor) in 1586 - two years before the attempted invasion of Britain by the Spanish Armada. Unfortunately this has no map but as the content is so detailed we hope to create a conjectural map by relating the measurements and topographical information to the later maps.

Although the 1776 and 1841-42 maps show the basic layout of the fields to be approximately as they are today (give or take numerous new roads and several hundred new houses !) the situation in 1586 was totally different, as the mediaeval system of communal strip farming in 'open' fields was still then in operation. What we now call 'fields' are technically *enclosures* or

closes, as *fields* then described four vast hedgeless tracts of arable land subdivided into smaller areas called *furlongs*, which in turn were subdivided into thousands of *strips*. Each farmer would have numerous strips scattered throughout all the *fields*, in theory to allow everyone a fair distribution of good and poor land, but in practice involving endless travelling time with ploughs and oxen between the different locations.

Bingham's four open fields were called *Chapel* or *North Field* situated approximately between Chapel Lane and Nottingham Road; *South Field* stretching towards Tithby; *Starnhill* or *East Field* south of the Grantham Road; and *Brackendale* or *West Field* near the border with Cropwell Butler. In addition there was meadow and pasture land in the north of the parish. Many plots of land had fascinating names such as Hawstickins, Long Parnell, Black Myles, Quakefenne and Saucey. The 1586 Survey is written in both Elizabethan handwriting and in mediaeval Latin but fortunately we have amongst our members two ex-archivists with the appropriate expertise, one of whom - Val Henstock - has been commissioned to provide a modern translation of the vital details. However, much of the volume comprises detailed measurements of all the 4000+ strips, and a dozen volunteers (affectionately know as 'strippers' !) are working to transfer this information onto computer so it can be analysed. The next task will be to attempt to complete the 'jigsaw' by placing all the various plots of land in their probable locations onto a map - watch this space !

EARLY PHOTOGRAPHS OF BINGHAM



The earliest photograph we have found so far is the above shot of the Church School group of about 90 pupils and five adults which we believe was taken in 1878 or 79, some forty years after the invention of photography in 1839. Two processes were announced only 18 days apart; the first by Louis Jacques Daguerre in Paris followed by William Henry Fox Talbot in London. The Frenchman's commercial drive ensured that the Daguerretype process was quickly marketed worldwide so that Nottingham's first studio opened in the attic of Bromley House, Angel Row, in October 1841. Daguerretype produced wonderfully sharp images but they couldn't be easily copied. However, it remained popular for at least the next 20 years. Initially, long exposures of 15mins or more were involved but this was soon shortened to 1 or 2 mins which made it practical for portraiture.

Fox Talbot's method involved a paper negative from which several prints could be obtained. Calotype suffered from fading and loss of definition but Talbot's

negative/positive principle remained the basis of photography until the recent advent of digital cameras. Developments of his method came thick and fast leading to the 'wet collodion' process in 1851. These plates had to be prepared, exposed and developed while still wet but it was cheaper and yielded two types of photograph; a negative that could be used to make any number of prints or as a glass positive lantern slide. In 1854 David Clayton in Nottingham offered portraits from 2s.6d (12½p) and stressed that the picture, unlike Daguerrotype, did not have to be tilted to see the

image. By the early 1860s, photographers were able to move out of their studios to take pictures outdoors.

If we are right about the date of the school photograph, it would have been taken using a wet collodion plate and several of the younger children have moved during the long exposure time. To right centre of the group is the headmaster Mr Ledsome with his wife proudly displaying the latest teaching aid - an abacus! There are two other members of staff at extreme left and right (possibly Mrs Hoe the infant teacher) and towering over the back row of boys, the curate Rev. Vernon R Carter. In his Board School report of 11th April 1879, Mr Jones mentions the visit of a photographer from Grantham to take a school group photograph at his school and 17 children paying a shilling for a print. As far as we know, not a single copy has survived.

It was not until the 1880s, with the introduction of dry plates with faster emulsions and improved cameras, that photography became a more manageable pursuit. The photograph (below) of the harvest at Saxondale using



steam driven machinery was taken in 1896 by Bingham's first resident professional photographer, Herbert Morris. In the foreground is his leather plate case which he left in shot. His father ran a drapers shop in Market Street and apart from working in the shop, Herbert conducted his photographic business from 'Camera Villa' at (probably) No.9 Long Acre, starting in 1885 and the last picture of his that we've found is c.1908. It seems that most photographers in rural areas had to have a second or third string to their bow in order to make a living; he was also clerk to the gas company.

The BHTA picture collection includes two other photographs from this early period; Samuel White outside his general store in Market Street c.1880 and Donkey Green Cottage, Long Acre East c.1890. Even more tantalising is a report in the Nottingham Review of 23rd August 1861 that the architect of the new Butter Cross had a photograph taken. This could be one, if not **the**, earliest picture of Bingham but no print has so far been found. Where have all these pictures disappeared to? They might still be in someone's loft or family album. If you find anything, we would be keen to scan the pictures into our collection and return your originals.



The cast of the joint Bingham Community Arts and BHTA production of 'Bingham, Christmas, 1865' take their final bow before a capacity audience at the Infant School Hall last December. From left to right: Neville Ward, Jeremy Leaman, Philip Bacon, Sylvia Aldworth, Robin Aldworth, Lynne Hapgood and Steven Halls. Photo: Sue Hull

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Part of our current project is to attempt to map land occupancy in Bingham in 1776 and 1586 from land holdings records. We have gathered together all the available old maps – including one made by King in 1806. Intriguingly, this names Starnhill Farm as *Starling House*. We know from other records that the medieval open field to the south east of the parish was named Starnhill (sometimes spelt 'Sternhill'), so why the change on this map? It was back to 'Starnhill' on subsequent maps.

A Christmas present, in the shape of a slim volume called "Ey Up Me Duck",

about the dialect of Derbyshire and the East Midlands gave a possible answer. It gives the dialect word for starling as 'starnel'. So maybe Mr King, asking a local what this place was called, was told "Stan'll" and perhaps, knowing the dialect, translated this into standard English as 'Starling', rather than Starn Hill! Even today, huge flocks of starlings are seen swooping over this area, so is it too far fetched to think that the birds gave their name to the open field, and that the mis-interpretation actually stems from some medieval scribe and that it really should be Starling Farm?

BHTA CONTACTS

General e-mail: info@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*

WHAT'S IN A DATE?



You may have noticed the sign '1792 AD' on the Wheatsheaf pub in Long Acre but this dated brick on the frontage tells a different story. Can you find it?