

DISCOVERING BINGHAM

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

LITTLE BROWN JUG



In the first of the BHTA lectures for this year with the intriguing title, *Little Brown Jug*, Adrian Henstock delighted field walkers in the audience by relating some of their finds to actual examples of salt-glazed stoneware. He showed photographs of some of the finds with examples of what the complete pieces could have looked like. (As shown above) He had also brought a small collection of decorative pots, and also more functional but no less beautiful items of kitchenware.

He explained that stoneware came here from Germany, where the 'stein' (German for 'stone') is still the preferred drinking vessel, and indeed he believes that many of the items found by field walkers would have been from ale houses in Bingham.

Bottles with a bearded man's face as decoration are called 'bellarmines' and are supposed to represent a hated Cardinal Bellamino. Some may have been used as 'witch bottles', which were filled with various foul substances and put into the rafters of houses

to ward off witches. Two such bottles were found in a cottage in Long Clawson, and given the literature which gives details of supposed witches causing havoc at Belvoir Castle, it is quite possible that belief in witchcraft was rife in the Vale of Belvoir in the early 1600s. Adrian then went on to tell us about James Morley, a Nottingham man, previously a brick maker, who became a very successful pot maker in c. 1690. The location of his pottery now lies beneath the ice stadium. His brother Thomas also set up a pottery at Potter's Hill, Crich, in Derbyshire where there was a ready supply of the essential commodities required for making pots; namely coal and clay. The products of the two potteries are virtually indistinguishable. The Morleys later faced competition from

the Wyer family, who made both stoneware and clay pipes on a site which is now part of the Victoria Centre.

Pots from Morley's pottery have been found in many distant places, even in the USA in the garden of George Washington's house. It is also worthy of note that with the introduction of coffee into this country, an item of pottery called a 'capucine', became popular. Pots must have been in great demand, and as Adrian went on to show examples of the decoration on loving cups and punchbowls, which ranged from flowers to cartoons; it was obvious that they were not purely functional items.

There was a highly polished loving cup with pinched out finials that was plain but especially appealing; various items with a zig-zag and vertical stripe decoration, and



The audience get a closer look and some salt-glazed stoneware pots following Adrian Henstock's lecture.

a teapot of 1750 with a clay 'breadcrumb' decoration. This is a technique that produces the appearance of a scattering of breadcrumbs, and was the method used to produce the iconic Bear Jugs. These bear-shaped jugs were covered in these breadcrumbs, giving a credible facsimile of fur.

Most of these items ranged in colour from a pale gold, through orange to a dark brown; thus the little brown jug of the title of the talk.

Even more intricate pieces followed with a top-hatted teapot, c.1840. Several pieces with 'applied sprigs' or 'pierced' decoration or hunting scenes; a jug with a handle shaped like a greyhound, and a hot water bottle made to resemble a doctor's bag.

The final item was appreciated by the audience because it was clever but also fun. It was a jug that when sitting the right way up and presumably before the contents were drunk, shows a glum-faced man, but when upside down, after the contents have been drunk, shows a very happy man.

A question and answer session followed the lecture, and Adrian was able to provide some additional and interesting information.

THE BINGHAM BOYS AND THE BOER WAR

On 8th January 1900 this letter was published in the Nottingham Daily Express sent, from South Africa, by Jack Gill to his parents, James and Sarah, living in Needham Street. Jack was a Trooper, serving with Thorneycrofts Mounted Infantry, raised and paid for by Lt. Col. Alec Thorneycroft.

The company of 500 men, were mostly irregulars, acting

as scouts and as a fighting force.

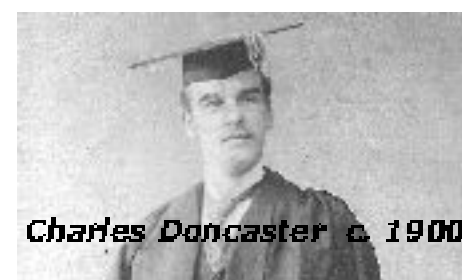
"Frere Camp 4th December 1899

Dear Father and Mother, I know you will be expecting a letter before now, but we are hard at work from 3-00am until late at night and the weather is awfully hot. Knocks a chap up; our horses are getting thin. We have little time for letter writing. Several times lately we have been travelling at night. Telling the truth, we have done an average of thirty miles a day, that is a lot in this country, trying weather and rough country. Yesterday six of us were sent out on a patrol of twenty miles before we had our breakfast, seeing whether there was a clear road, as army infantry were travelling along. Three of our men have been captured by the Boers. We had several wounded in the last engagement at Mooi River. Joubert, the Boers Commandant sent us a letter saying that the three men captured are all well. Another letter came from a Dutch farmer saying that our fire that day was the hottest they had ever faced. Thirteen Boers were killed and several wounded. I have had more experiences than I could ever tell you in a letter and some narrow escapes; one was with a shell which dropped about six yards from me, right among our little company. I can stand the whiz of the bullets, shells take some standing. Tell all friends that I am alright up to present. We are at Frere and we cannot get any further, for the enemy blew up the bridge over the Tugela River. We had a general parade of Thorneycrofts Horse, Natal Rifles and Kings Royal Rifles

and some English lord inspected us. This is the biggest war England has ever had and if I get through I shall get a medal. I paid today 2s 6d for a loaf of bread and 5s for a small beer. I tell you it is a luxury. Think of me at Christmas. I have no idea where I will be; instead of plum pudding it will be bully beef and biscuits for me. (Later) Have just returned from a two day march. Tried to get to Colenso but the Boers are too strong so we all retired. Expect a general advance early now. Goodbye for present. Yours Jack."

The Newspaper also printed the names and regiments of the men from Bingham who were fighting in the Boer War as: Sergeant Marsh-South Notts Hussars, Trooper Gill-Thorneycrofts Mounted Infantry, Private Spurr-1st Battalion Derbyshire Regiment, Private Williams-3rd Grenadier Guards, Private Shepherd-1st Durham Light Infantry, Private Singleton-2nd Battalion Derbyshire Regmt, Trooper Gash-5th Dragoon Guards,

Perhaps it was this letter from Jack Gill that led to the Bingham Patriotic Concerts that took place on January 11th and 12th 1900. Charles Doncaster, the local Draper and musician who was



Charles Doncaster c. 1900

organist at the Methodist Chapel, composed and wrote the words of a song entitled '**The Bingham Boys**' which

was sung at the concert by Mr S F Blood and received with 'much enthusiasm by those present'. The words of the song urged the young men of Bingham to join the fight.

The opening lines of the chorus give a flavour of the patriotic fervour:

*'Then call out the Bingham Boys
They'll show them how to fight
Just give the Volunteers a chance
And they'll soon put 'em right.'*

Later in the lyrics the 'boys' are named as: Sergeant Wilson, Pte. Williams of the Grenadiers, Johnny Gill with Thorneycroft's Light Horse, Freddy Shepherd, Tommy Gash and Spurr, showing some differences between Doncaster's and the Daily Express report.

Two hundred of Thorneycroft's men led the column of Lancashire Fusiliers and others in the infamous battle for Spionkop. Blunders by the British General led to the deaths of over 300 men and at least 500 were wounded. Though heavily outnumbered the Boers won the battle for Spionkop. What happened to Jack Gill? Did he ever make it back to Bingham and receive his medal?

Rumour has it that the intrepid duo, Robin Aldworth and Jack Wilson, will be on hand at the next BHTA Hot Pot Supper to give a spirited rendering of the complete and unabridged version of 'The Bingham Boys'. Not to be missed!

ORAL HISTORIES

In December 2005, Issue No. 6 of *Discovering Bingham* announced the completion of the first tranche of 29 Oral History tapes and transcripts had been presented to the Bingham and Nottingham

libraries. Since then, Hilda Smith and her small team of interviewers have been recording the stories of more people who were born in the town and have memories going back 50 to 80 years and others who live or work in the town today recording life as it is now. So further sets will be added to the archive in due course. To give readers a taste of what these interviews reveal we will be including an occasional series in future issues of the newsletter. The first gives a summary of what Connie Jones told her interviewer.

Connie was housekeeper to Dr Croft, who lived in the big white house by the trafficlights on the corner of Long Acre and Tithby Road. She wasn't a local girl, born and bred, but came to live in Bingham after the War.

As a lovely, young 17 year old, she had wanted to join the army, but was deemed to be too young, and had therefore joined the NAAFI. Life in the NAAFI was certainly no picnic, and she found herself cooking for 200 at a time, and not on a gas or electric oven, where temperatures are easily controlled, but on a huge, old coal-fire with ovens at either side. A day for her, began at 7.30 and didn't finish until 10.30 at night, though they did get a break in the afternoon. She also remembers going out with the mobile tea wagons, when they would welcome service personnel off the boats in Hull with a cup of tea and a sandwich or a piece of cake.

On arriving in Bingham after the War, and on the recommendation of Dr Wade, she secured a position as housekeeper to Dr Croft. Life in the Doctor's house was no easier than life in the NAAFI. Once more she was working long hours; starting at 7 am and working until 10 at night, and quite often being disturbed during the night by someone with an emergency that required the Doctor's help. The house was large; 4/5 bedrooms and on three levels. At the front were the surgery, waiting room and dispensary. There was also a large garden that went back almost as far as The Banks.

Dr Croft was not the only doctor for whom she had to cater. Drs Wade and Sparrow were partners, but there were also young locums coming and going. She mentions Dr Hutson, Dr Leadley and Dr Hindley. Bingham people will probably remember some of these doctors. There was no appointment system as such, but the doctors appear to have coped very well. There would have been far fewer patients on their lists at that time, of course. When Dr Croft retired, he had a bungalow built in the garden of the big house. Unhappily, this bungalow burnt down, and he spent his last days living with a friend. Connie spent the last days of her working life (paid employment that is) working in the Belvoir Vale Centre, behind the police station. She retired at the age of 66, but went on to work at helping in one of the older people's



Connie Jones

centres, organizing Bingo and Whist, and probably much else.

If you would like to hear more of Connie's, or other interviewees', memories, just ask at the Library for the BHTA Oral History Archive of tapes and written transcripts.

NEW FIELD UPDATE

In the last issue we said, 'watch this space' about the field we walked in November 2008. We have now had some of the finds identified. It was not straight forward as it involved talking to three different experts, but in the end the finds were confirmed as:

Iron Age

Roman ranging in age from mid 1stC to 3rd-4thC

Anglo-Saxon 5th-8thC

Late Saxon Lincoln shelly ware late 9th-late 10thC

Saxo-Norman South Lincs. shell and quartz tempered ware, late 12th-13th C

Interestingly, the Iron Age finds form a cluster near the A52 just opposite the Whatton prison car park, which is where Iron Age pottery was found during the archaeological survey done before the car park was built. We have yet to show the medieval sherds to the specialist who identifies them for us, but we could have the full set of fabric types from 12th to 16th centuries. This is an extra-ordinarily complete sequence for one field and is

repeated in only one other place in the parish. These finds make this field together with the one opposite it on Granby Lane a particularly important area for understanding the history of settlement in Bingham.

A GLIMPSE INTO 14th C. BINGHAM

In c.1330 the poor prisoners of the Sheriff of Nottingham languishing in his prison in Nottingham Castle petitioned King Edward III to have their cases heard by the local justices. Apparently they were dying of hunger and privation while awaiting trial simply because no-one had been appointed to hold a court in what were then very troubled political times. The petition is in the National Archives in London and lists the names of some 80 prisoners from all over the county being held for unspecified offences, and includes Geoffrey le Couper and John le Glover both of Bingham. This is the earliest reference to some of the crafts practiced in the medieval town - which had recently received its charter in 1314 - and suggests that trade was thriving. The cooper would have made wooden barrels and other containers and the glover would have been cutting and sewing gloves out of tanned leather. The list also includes Roger le Potter of 'Sherington' which was the old spelling of Scarrington,

suggesting there was a mediaeval pottery there - the products of which we may well have picked up whilst field walking the fields of Bingham?

Readers will be relieved to learn that the court was eventually convened, one of the two justices being Richard de Whatton, whose effigy still survives in Whatton church, and all our three local men were pardoned for their alleged misdoings. This was not the case with a cutpurse who committed his crime actually in the Hall of Pleas in Nottingham Castle during the sessions - he was summarily convicted by a jury consisting of the nearest by-standers and sentenced to be hanged.

2009 LECTURES

8.00pm. Methodist Hall

26th. March

Beryl Cobbing and Pam Priestland

Was Sir Thomas Stanhope 'the ugliest toad in the world'? :

Local politics in Elizabethan Shelford and Bingham.

14th. May

Peter Allen

WHAT WE FOUND IN THE FIELDS

An overview of our 'History of Settlement' project as we near completion at the end of the year.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

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