

DISCOVERING BINGHAM

Quarterly NEWSLETTER of the **Bingham Heritage Trails Association**
www.binghamheritage.org.uk Registered Charity No: 1090475 Issue No. 47 - March 2015

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

CONTINUING WORLD WAR ONE COMMEMORATIONS

The magnificent, poignant display of scarlet poppies in the moat of the Tower of London to commemorate the start of WW1 has been dismantled but in Bingham acts of remembrance will continue over, at least, the next four years. One of these will be achieved by the bell ringers of the Parish Church who are attempting to complete a quarter peal (around 1,260 changes) each month to honour the men of Bingham who were killed in that month 100 years ago. Their aim is to perform each peal on the first Sunday of each month before Evensong with the fall back to a later Sunday if, for any reason, this cannot be achieved.

The first 1260 Plain Bob Minor quarter peal was rung by a team of six ringers on 11th January in remembrance of George Wilford who gave his life for his country on 21st January 1915. The peal in February marked the anniversary for Frank Harris and Frederick States who were both killed on 6th February 1915. Two more peals are planned before our next newsletter; Percy William Hind in March and William Mabbott Widnall for May. If you bought the BHTA 2015 calendar you will find all the anniversary dates shown throughout the



Our stall at the Town Winter Fair with a display of WW1 photos, documents and memorabilia illustrating our research project and appealing for Bingham residents to search their attics for more evidence of ancestors' contributions to the 'Great War'.

year. Our plan is to continue this in the calendars we publish up to 2018.

Most of the information is recorded in the volume of the Roll of Honour held in the Parish Church relating to the names of 'The Fallen' on the rood screen War Memorial. However, our Heritage Lottery grant funded research project into WW1 has already shown that this record is not entirely complete or accurate. During March we will be placing on our web site the first tranche of detailed information on the Service records, War Dairies and Family Histories of those from Bingham who made the ultimate sacrifice. The work doesn't stop there, we are still appealing to the descendents

of all those who served in WW1 to search their family photo albums and archives to find more information on all the named individuals.

As shown in the picture above, our appeal was the main feature on our stall at the December Winter Fair in the Market Place. To reach a wider audience this information has been incorporated in two semi-permanent displays, one placed in the entrance of the Medical Centre (see page 2) and the other in our newly re-opened library. Apart from listing those who died in the war the display also lists all the family names of those who served and survived the hostilities. The majority of these are listed in the Roll of



Medical Centre display

FIRST LECTURE OF THE SEASON

18th and 19th century Bingham at Play was the title of the first lecture of the season given by Joyce Allen, who has studied old newspaper articles to gather information. Joyce began by contrasting children's lives. Dr Smythe, who lived on Church Street, employed nursemaids, saw his children for two hours daily at 9.30am and 4.30pm and gave them posh toys like a rocking horse and dissected maps (early jigsaw) Children of labourers and tradesmen had little time to play as they were working or at school. Their toys included marbles, hoops and possibly a ball. Boys enjoyed rough and tumble and there were complaints about them running wild between the market stalls, stealing bird's eggs, throwing stones and fighting. Most children's treats came from the Church and Sunday school. In July 1844 one hundred children from the Church Sunday school were treated to tea and supper in front of the Rectory followed by 'innocent sports' on the green or a walk round the garden. The Wesleyans provided plum cake and tea

followed by sports. When the railway came the treat became a trip to Skegness.

Older children, particularly the girls, enjoyed balls held in inns, especially The King's Arms (now The Buttercross) and The Chesterfield Arms. At one ball dancing began at 7pm and continued until 6am next day.

Bingham had lots of clubs and groups, some charitable and some trade organisations, most were for men. Celebrations for feast days began with a church service followed by a parade through town to a hostelry for a meal and numerous toasts! The Labourer's Friend Society had a ploughing match and prizes for the best field of potatoes or turnips and even the most deserving widow.

There is no mention of women's societies but there were groups associated with Church or Chapel. In 1859 women raised £70 towards the building of the Wesleyan school and teacher's house on Kirk Hill. The Bingham Dorcas Society made clothes for the poor. On special occasions women drank tea in the Wheatsheaf (now The Bingham). When the Public

Honour with their regiment and indications of wounds but much of our remaining research work will be involved in finding out as much as possible about each individual. For this we need photos, letters and other memorabilia which includes family stories and recollections.

If you find family names on the displays that tie in with you or anyone you know, please talk to those who might be holding information which they would be willing to loan us, for copying and returning, that will eventually be used by our research team to extend the scope of our web site pages on Bingham and the 'Great War'. Although there is much to be found by 'browsing the Internet' there are bound to be long forgotten, unique images and documents in cupboards and attics that deserve to see the light of day. In this way we can help to ensure that the contribution made by those that died, and those that survived, will be recorded and remembered.



A hearty round of applause at the end of Joyce Allen's talk on Bingham at Play in the past.

Library and Newsroom (now the Spiritualist Church on Long Acre) opened in April 1853 the ladies of Bingham provided a 'sumptuous tea'. Tea was a feature of gatherings and was always reported by newspapers.

Lectures were popular. In 1845 a magic lantern show attracted a large audience who were amazed by pictures of heavenly bodies, the sea, battles and British soldiers in their camps.

Bingham had its own theatre and plays and concerts were popular. The first Choral society was founded in 1848 and then another in 1898. A song, Bingham Boys, composed by local shopkeeper Charles Doncaster was recorded for the lecture and played to the 21st century audience. Among various outdoor entertainment there were shooting parties. @The Season' was one of the few times when the Earl of Chesterfield visited. Hare coursing, horse racing and the associated betting were popular. The cricket club was founded in 1787 and games were played for money.

There were two markets a year for hiring workers and these usually attracted entertainments such as a circus and shows. The most impressive was the American Equestrians in 1844 that brought 40 horses and entertained audiences in a specially erected pavilion that could seat 2,000 people. Bingham was always ready to celebrate and party. These celebrations usually ended with the gentlemen going for dinner and toasts and the ladies going for tea!

The next lecture will be on March 26th, see page 4.

MEDIEVAL CONCRETE

In the September 2014 issue of Discovering Bingham we hinted at something exciting having been found in the test pits we dug in front garden of the SureStart building during the 700th anniversary celebrations. The excitement was over a concrete floor found within the walls of what we are fairly certain was the medieval Manor House that was occupied by Sir Richard de Bingham and later by his widow Lady Alice and their son Sir William.

Concrete was widely used by the Romans, but when the Roman Army left England in 410 and the Anglo-Saxons settled here the knowledge of making concrete was lost. No one knows quite when and how it came back. There are records of the use of plaster and lime-ash floors in the late 16th century and a record in Salzman's "Building in England down to 1540" of Henry III ordering the finishing of the dais in the hall of Nottingham Castle with French plaster in 1254.

Documents from the early 1600s describe the process of making Plaster of Paris. A fire was made of lumps of gypsum piled on charcoal and allowed to burn out. The heating converted the gypsum into plaster of Paris. When cold the ashes were flailed and then sieved. The fine white ash was used for plaster for walls while the coarse sievings of charcoal and unburnt gypsum were used to make floors. How this was done is not described.

The concrete in Bingham consists of an aggregate of lumps of charcoal and gypsum

with some stones, bits of plaster and fuel-ash slag. This is the sort of debris that is likely to have been left in the fire for making the plaster. The aggregate is set in a mix of plaster and lime ash. It is this that makes it into hard concrete.

The only sure evidence of age for the Bingham Manor House floor is from a reference in the manorial survey of 1586 to the Manor House being in a state of ruin. In our test pit we found a pile of a broken Midland Yellow Ware pancheon resting on a degraded and worn concrete floor. This type of pottery was being made in Ticknall in 1600 or thereabouts. The floor, then is older than this. However, the only time in the history of Bingham when there was anyone rich enough to afford a concrete floor when the Lord of the manor lived within the village was between 1266 and the Black Death of 1348-49, the period of occupancy by the de Bingham. After Sir William's death in the Black Death we do not know who lived in the Manor House, if anyone at all. So, there is a possibility that this concrete floor dates from the late 13th to early 14th centuries.

This is not unlikely. Knowledge of concrete could well have been brought to England by returning Crusaders in the 12th century. They would have seen it used across Europe from Paris to the Middle East. All the raw materials were locally available for Bingham. Gypsum and limestone were widely mined hereabouts and the Manor House wall we excavated was made of stone with a lime mortar. Most



coincidence a few weeks after our dig, we organised a visit to the Prebendary Manor House at Nassingham where we were shown a very similar flooring material which was thought to be 'Medieval' but had not been dated. Maybe we have competition for claiming the "oldest"?

interestingly, there were two layers of concrete in the floor. The lower one was two inches thick and very crumbly. It was clearly unfit for purpose and might have been the result of an experiment. It was then coated with a skim of gypsum plaster and another two inches of concrete were laid on top of this. (see above) The upper concrete is hard and is the one described here.

Our preliminary conclusion is that this concrete might well date from the late 13th or early 14th centuries. If so, it could be the oldest recorded in England. By a strange

MARKET PLACE DIG

In April and May contractors have been appointed by the Rushdiffe Borough Council to remove and replace the trees in the Market Place. BHTA has asked the Council for permission to take advantage of this work to dig at least one archaeological test pit in an attempt to explore the early history of the Market Place. Our aim would be to identify and date earlier surfaces of the market place, possibly even the first recorded one dating to 1314.

A MESSAGE FOR BHTA MEMBERS

Are you receiving emails from the Secretary?

Recent communications have included notice of the public lecture series, our Annual General Meeting and news from the Council for British Archaeology.

If you have not received these, it may be that we have an out-of-date or inaccurate email address for you. Please contact the Secretary at: david.mason407@ntlworld.com to update your details.

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

2015 LECTURES

To be held at 7.30pm.
in the W.I Hall,
Station Street
Admission FREE

Thursday

26th March

Social Effects of
World War One

David Mason

Thursday

4th June

Crow Close

Adrian Henstock &

Peter Allen

To be followed on
Thursday 18th June

at 7.30pm by our

ANNUAL

GENERAL

MEETING

also in the WI Hall

None members are
welcome to attend to
hear presentations on
our recent work.