

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

PITSTOP?

In the December issue we announced the end of the archeological pits project, but we were not quite there. There is always the tidying up to do - you will remember that we ended the field walking project in 2010, but it was not until September 2014 that we eventually handed over the finds to the Nottingham University Museum. We informed the Heritage Lottery Fund that this project was ended and in January they closed our account. To our surprise we had an under-spend. They asked us to return it to them, though they did let us buy a new set of

display boards to replace the ones we bought twelve years ago. The next job was to put the finds into museum-quality boxes, some for long-term storage, but most to go back to the householders who allowed us to dig a pit in their garden. By the time you read this all those householders who would like to keep the finds will have them. We have kept some back. The important ones are the Late Saxon finds. These date from 850 to 1050 and when Jane Young was identifying them for us she found some that she had not seen before and asked if we would let her borrow them to do some research on, when the project ended. We

have also removed most of the bricks, tiles, rusted metal, coal, bones and teeth. We have examined all of these quite closely and the details are registered in our database, but they told us very little. The ones that did contribute to the story have been taken out and will be stored separately from the householder collections. These include bricks that could be measured, red clay roof tiles made before 1480 when the thickness was standardised and the limestone roof tiles. These are very rare in the county and we have them from Roman and medieval houses. Also we have kept back some of the plaster and lime floor from the medieval manor house. Pieces of this have been sent away for chemical analysis and we may want more for further research. As this floor is about 200 years older than any other of its kind so far recorded in England, we may want to do some more detailed work on it. Of course, now that the project is ended we can see places where we should have put pits, but did not. One place is Long Acre. This may have been the main street in Norman times, but we did not collect enough information from the test pits to demonstrate if this is true. Watch this space!



The team of volunteers working at packing the numbered finds into boxes to be returned to property owners who allowed us to dig a pit in their gardens. With each box is a bound report giving a detailed analysis and a full catalogue of the contents.

THE FIRST LECTURE OF THE SEASON

The **Archaeology of Nottingham's Trams** was the title of the first lecture of 2016 delivered by Gareth Davies, Project Manager of Trent and Peak Archaeology, to an audience of sixty. The new tramlines in Nottingham run from the City Centre to Toton and to the Clifton Park and Ride. Initially the cost was £560 million but this rose to £650 million. The post-excavation work is now completed and throughout the construction archaeologists watched the work progressing. Along **University Boulevard** land horizons were dated back to 2-3,000 years BC. A few Bronze Age artefacts were found and 18th Century field boundaries were identified. In **Beeston**, on the site of the medieval St. John's Church, the grave of Mary Lowe was excavated. She died in 1882 aged 57 and had been a textile worker. At the site of the fire station there was evidence of Victorian housing and the floor and cellar of the Three Horseshoes pub was found with Napoleon III coins and a late medieval pot. No evidence of a Civil War fort was discovered on **Meadows Way** but worked flints indicated earlier inhabitants.

There were two main excavations:

Clifton Park and Ride a 12-hectare site on a slope facing Fareham Brook behind the Larkhill Retirement Village. The geophysical survey showed ridge and furrow.



Gareth giving a lively and information-packed presentation also introduced us to a new archaeological term; '...a site being Victorianed.' -which we took to be uncomplimentary!

When the top-soil was removed an Iron Age ditch and pit and a Bronze Age burial mound were discovered. The burial mound was 17 metres across. It stood on its own with some pottery finds. The Iron Age pit contained pottery and a glass bead. A Middle Iron Age rubbish pit contained lots of pottery and some flint tools. There was evidence of a large enclosure, which may have been for stock or possibly was a seasonal meeting place, as there seemed to be entry points at the cardinal points of the compass.

Lenton. This excavation site was opposite the White Hart and in the area of Lenton Priory. The Priory was founded in 1106/07 and was the largest in the area. There is now only one pillar left! Previous excavations during the 1930s and in 1943 and 1951 had researched the appearance of the Priory and the approximate area it covered. A Martinmas Fair was held just outside the precincts

of the Priory. Permission was given initially for an 8 day fair, later extended to 12 days in 1232. The income from the fair provided a large proportion of the Priory's annual income. The excavations were in the areas known as Skinner's and Fisher's Row. These showed that the earliest occupation in the area dates back to 1100 just before the Priory. A leather shoe, Roman finds, a jetton (accounting counter) dated 1272 and a C13th token were found.

During the C13th and C14th, ditches flanking Abbey Street were part of the outer precinct and indicated market activity. Evidence of red fruits, cereal bran with corn crackle weed as well as eel, herring and pig bones were found as well as an Edward III gold 'noble' dated 1369-77 and a scale pan with a C14th brazier's seal.

The best evidence of the fair dates from the C15th/C16th. Large rubbish pits, postholes probably for more permanent stalls, a well and stone

footings, lead weights and a jet cross, probably from a rosary, were unearthed. Evidence of pits in the ground suggested they might have been for wicker baskets. Further finds were an unbutchered cow and a large pit containing mussel and oyster shells along with three large iron knives.

During the C16th and C17th there was less activity presumably as a result of the Dissolution. A cesspit and a drain were discovered dating from a time when it was no longer a market site.

After the completion of the main excavations the archaeologists maintained a watching brief in the area as the tram work progressed. Near the expected site of the Priory gatehouse some architectural stone was found but not in situ. It is thought that these may have come from the destruction of the medieval structure by the Victorians. The south wall of the northern cloister was located, which confirmed the earlier estimates of the dimensions of the Priory. A tile dating from 1400 (on the screen in the photo above) was also revealed which matches tiles found at Beauvale Priory. Below the cloister there were finds of late Anglo-Saxon pottery which pre-date the Priory.

The Martinmas Fair has been re-established in Lenton and there is a plan to possibly turn part of the church into a heritage centre. Hopefully the artefacts found during the excavations will be on display either in Lenton or at Nottingham Castle.

LIKE FATHER LIKE SON

It isn't often that we find that a father and son served in the First World War, but we found that both John and John Henry Spurr did just that. John Spurr Sen. was born in 1869 in East Bridgford, but the 1881 census shows he was living in Bingham with his family and was working as a day boy on a farm. Perhaps looking for adventure, he joined a cavalry regiment and was posted to Ireland where he met and married Agnes Valentine in Dublin. Two of their children, Elizabeth and John Henry were born in Kildare, Ireland. Elizabeth was born in Newbridge, Kildare where the Cavalry regiment was first based and John Henry at Curragh Camp, where the Cavalry regiment was later transferred. When the family returned to England John Sen. worked first as a groom and later as a coachman at Huntingdon Drive, The Park, Nottingham. When the war broke out in 1914 the family were in Bingham and both father John and son John Henry enlisted. John would have been 46 when he enlisted on 27th March 1915 and as he was too old for combat overseas he was assigned to No. 65 Protection Company, Royal Defence Corps. The Royal Defence Corps was a corps of the British Army formed in March 1916. It was formed of (Home Service) garrisons, which were composed of soldiers either too old or medically unfit for active service and unable to be transferred overseas. The role of the regiment was to provide troops for security and guard duties inside the U.K., guarding important locations such as ports or bridges and

also Prisoner of War Camps. He was discharged on 11th June 1919 and awarded the Silver War Badge, which was given generally to soldiers who were no longer fit for active service.

John Henry joined the 9th Battalion, Worcester Regiment and sailed for Mesopotamia in 1915. In 1917 he was part of a campaign that is not widely known about. He, with other members of his unit, joined what became known as the Dunsterville Column. This was an Allied military mission of 1,000 men made up of Australian, New Zealand, British and Canadian troops drawn from the Mesopotamian front and named after its Commander, General Lionel Dunsterville. (Pictured) The mission was to gather



information, train and command local forces and prevent the spread of German propaganda. Officers sent to join the force had to learn Arabic and Russian

on their voyage out. Part of their mission was to protect the oil fields at Baku on the Caspian Sea. Having first fought 3,000 Russian Bolshevik troops at Enzeli, they moved on to the Baku oilfields which were a primary target for advancing Turkish troops and the Dunsterforce endured a brutal siege there in September 1918, before being forced to withdraw. For General Dunsterville's diaries and accounts of the missions carried out by his troops, go to www.gwpda.org/dunsterville.

Father and son returned to the quiet of Bingham. We can only imagine the stories John Henry had to tell. They left Bingham in 1925. John Henry moved to Nottingham to work in the tobacco industry. He married Florence Faulkner in 1937. He died on 27/1/1962 leaving his widow £242 7s 6d.

BINGHAM IN WW2

As well as throwing up examples of generations serving together, our research on WW1 has also revealed cases of successive generations serving in WW1 and WW2; while, across the country, many WW1 service personnel subsequently helped staff the Home Guard some twenty years later.

Our website already contains a brief section on WW2, compiled originally by Eric Sharp and subsequently augmented by Jim Johnson. This was always intended to form a resource to which further information could be added. Our work on WW1 has made us keenly aware of how much hidden material there is to be discovered and has stimulated a renewed curiosity about WW2.

In marked contrast to WW1, there are still Bingham residents who have direct personal experience of WW2. Those who served in the armed forces are, sadly, a shrinking group but there are

many others who will have reminiscences of this dramatic period in our history. In order to try to capture these important memories before they are lost forever, BHTA has decided to initiate a new project on Bingham in WW2. We would be keen to hear from anyone who served, in any capacity, in the conflict – as military personnel, in the Land Army, medical services etc. – as well as anyone who has memories they would like to share about everyday life and the impact of hostilities. We know that groups such as the WI and Scouts played important roles, as did the various religious communities. Perhaps you have recollections of wartime

evacuees, of prisoners of war or of military operations from nearby RAF Newton or other RAF and army bases. Can you provide a missing name in the above caption? If so, we'd like to hear from you. The project is being led by BHTA Secretary, David Mason, who can be contacted on 01949 876635 or via the contacts detailed below.



Bingham Home Guard 1940s:

Back row L to R: Tommy McKay, Harry Browne or Tommy Cooper, Fred Morley, W E Cupit, unknown. Front Row L to R: Ted Little, Tom Cowling, unknown, Fred Lane, Tom Chamberlain.

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

2016 LECTURES

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

Thursday 14th April
History of George
Green's Windmill
Tom Huggon

Thursday 12th May
Archaeological
Pits Project
Peter Allen