

DISCOVERING BINGHAM

Quarterly NEWSLETTER of the **Bingham Heritage Trails Association**
www.binghamheritage.org.uk Registered Charity No: 1090475 Issue No. 13 - September 2006

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

HISTORY GRABS THE KIDS AT BINGHAM FAIR

As usual BHTA set up their stand at the Bingham Town Fair on Saturday 10th June in the Market Place. It was decided to feature a small selection of the 30,000 archaeological finds from the current four-year parish field walking project. On a two metre long tray of 'earth' we arranged about 60 objects ranging from Neolithic flints to a fragment of a Victorian schoolchild's slate and pencil. The display attracted a great deal of interest from everyone but, as the pictures show, the children were completely fascinated. The tray was divided into six time periods starting at 10,000BC, through Roman and Medieval periods and ending with 'Modern' from 1830 to today.

Each time period was provided with a set of notes describing the objects on display and Association members were also on hand to provide further information. The majority of finds were fragments of pottery but there was also a hone stone and clay pipes dating from the Civil War in the 1640s. There have also been a number of unique finds such as a Neolithic hand axe, a Bronze Age flint arrowhead, a Civil War cannon ball and a signet ring seal. As we didn't want to



risk putting these on public display in case they were lost or damaged, these were displayed as photographs with a brief explanatory text.

The stand also featured the recently completed joint BHTA/U3A Churchyard mapping project showing examples of the extensive data that can now be accessed on our web site and at the library. Visitors were also able to pick up their free copy of the 'Bingham Churchyard Trail' leaflet. Another section that attracted attention was an aerial photograph of the town, taken in the 1950s, showing the buildings that still survive highlighted in yellow. Surprisingly large areas of the picture were un-coloured as there have been many changes in the

past 50 years. This has provided the theme for the BHTA 2007 Calendar that is now being prepared. This will use pictures of buildings that have gone or been substantially altered since the aerial photograph was taken. Don't forget to get your copy plus extras to give to your friends and relations for Christmas!

**HOT POT
SUPPER & QUIZ**
Saturday 11th November
7.30pm W.I. Hall
Tickets £10 incl. Wine
Ring 831575
for tickets or offers to host a table

AGM & CELEBRATION

Members will know that BHTA is a Registered Charity. This means that, although we have been very successful in gaining financial support for our Projects from the Lottery Heritage Fund, we can also approach other donors if we need to – as we did for the Churchyard Survey. It also means that we are listed in the Central Register of Charities so that details of our aims, who is on our Executive Committee, (the Trustees), how the Association is run (the Constitution) and how it spends the money it is given (the Accounts) are all open to public inspection.

Our Constitution requires us to hold an Annual General Meeting in the month of June each year or as soon after as practicable. Now, as a rule, most people, with good reasons, do not like Annual General Meetings, mainly because the Agenda is entirely predictable. BHTA's AGM meetings in the past have been no exception to the rule. In 2003 just ten members turned up who were not members of the Committee; in 2004 there was only one and in 2005, after strenuous attempts by the Committee to get more people to attend, we managed a total of nine! In 2006 over thirty Members attended, which with the Members of the Committee gave a grand total of forty-five.

How did we manage to do it? The AGM Agenda was the same as always – so what was it? We combined the AGM with a Celebration of all we had done and all we had achieved over the year. The emphasis was on the Celebration. There was an array of tasty buffet food,



Adrian Henstock, Tony Evans, Geoff Ashton and Roger Snowdin 'celebrating' at the AGM

fine wine to drink, displays of materials found during the field walking activities and plenty of opportunity for members to chat both with Member friends and with other Members they did not know quite as well or indeed at all. The Chairman's Annual Report, which is a required part of every AGM, came in the form of an illustrated presentation. Peter placed the emphasis on the parts Members had played in the real successes both in the History of Settlement and the Churchyard Survey Projects. This opportunity to socialise with other Members and to see ourselves enjoying the many activities we all took part in that contributed to the year's achievements was appreciated by everyone.

The evening finished with a short, formal AGM – written copies of the Chairman's Report and of the Accounts were sent off to the Charity Commission and were available to any Members who wished for them. We intend to do something similar next year – and turn our AGMs into events we will all look forward to.

NOTICE

To Members who have not yet renewed their 2006/2007 membership. Please send a cheque made to BHTA (min £2.00) to Joyce Allen. Thank you

WHAT THE PAPERS SAY

One of the maxims we hear today is that we should not believe all that we read in the newspapers. So how true was that in the 1860s? Bingham had its own correspondent to the Nottingham Telegraph and stories of Bingham residents appeared in the local news columns. So how true were these stories or was there a different interpretation? Take the report from the Nottingham Telegraph in May 1860.

'Alleged Robbery-Remarkable Case'

'On Wednesday, Elizabeth Shelton was charged with stealing an umbrella and six sovereigns from Mr Thompson of Bingham. Mr Thompson said he came to Nottingham on business on Monday and intended going back on Tuesday evening, but missed the train. He went to a public house by the station and gave the prisoner a can of ale out of charity. He left the public house and she followed him to Mr Hicklings Trent Bridge Inn. A hanky was thrown over his face and he lost consciousness and when he came to, the purse lay empty on a table. He stated that he could not tell whether he was in a private or public house when he came to. He went towards Nottingham, but fell over in the road in some water. He was helped by a passer-by and he gave information to detective Walker who arrested the woman in a public house in Poplar. She admitted having the umbrella which she was looking after, but said that the sovereigns she had given to a barman to look after were her own. Case dismissed for lack of evidence.'

Now how true was this report? Had the truth been perverted? What would Mrs Thomas have said if, for example, he had not bought Elizabeth Shelton a drink 'out of charity', but in order to 'pick her up'? That instead of having been chloroformed he had been so drunk he did not know where he was? Who can say?

And then there is the mischievous report about a trustee of the Temperance Hall in Bingham written under the headline 'Good news for Publicans'

'There remains but little of the temperance cause in Bingham, so prosperous there once a day. One of the founders of the Bingham Temperance Society a trustee of the hall after 20 years membership and strict personal observance of its precepts, purchased (tell it not in Gath)† absolutely purchased at a Nottingham store seven goodly kilderkins of capital ale [about 126 gallons], which has been duly delivered and deposited in a cellar, long a stranger to fermented liquors.'

Now what do we make of this? Was it a case of mistaken identity? Or after 20 years of abstinence the trustee had said, 'Enough is enough' or had he always had his kilderkins of ale in that cellar, but no-one had twigged. I don't know.

It's just what the papers say!
 †[Quote from Samuel that goes on, 'How the mighty have fallen']

TRENCH ART

As regular readers will know, BHTA is always on the lookout for photographs, documents and artifacts that



relate in some way to the heritage of the town. We often find that items that may at first glance look fairly ordinary, can reveal some fascinating facts or lead us into avenues of enquiry which we did not anticipate. A recent example was a brass matchbox holder, shown above, that was loaned to us by a local resident.

It was brought home as a souvenir by a member of the family returning from serving in France during the First World War. The front is engraved with, 'SOMME 1916' and the name 'P. Weyer', (not a Bingham name). On the side is written 'Thiepval 26.9' and the back is decorated with a rather un-British crown, intertwined ribbons and oak leaves. This information, with photos, was passed onto the Imperial War Museum and we received the following reply from Alan Jefferys in the Department of Exhibits and Firearms:

"The Museum defines your souvenir as 'trench art'. This can be broken down into three further distinctions. Firstly, material made by the troops in the trenches which is the rarest of all forms of trench art. Most material made during the First World War was produced behind the lines, objects were

generally functional and portable, as soldiers would have little room in their packs. The next group of objects were made by the local populace in France and Flanders and were either sold to troops during the war or to widows and pilgrims after the war [until the outbreak of WW2]. These were generally larger and less personalised items. The last distinction were pieces made in the UK as mementoes for the home, from items such as shells brought back from France by returning soldiers and by disabled or wounded soldiers as occupational therapy.

This matchbox holder is German made and quite possibly by a front-line German soldier at Thiepval on the Somme and then was perhaps given or found by the present owner's relation."

The Battle of the Somme started 1st July 1916 and ended, in virtual stalemate with the onset of winter, on 18th November. Thiepval, one of the main British objectives at the start, was finally captured, after three months of bloody fighting with huge loss of life on both sides, at the end of September. The war memorial at Thiepval today, lists 72,000 officers and men of the Allied force that have no known grave. Why did the German soldier, P. Weyer, date his matchbox holder the 26th September, so close to the fall of the town? Did he finish the engraving as a prisoner of war? Did he survive like the British soldier who brought it home to end up in Bingham? As with so many other things; the more questions we answer the more there are that remain unanswered. It has also introduced us to the subject of 'Trench Art'; a topic that few of us even knew existed.

HERITAGE ARTWORK

This year for the first time BHTA was involved with Toot Hill School in its end-of-term Activities Week. Chris Ritzmann, a teacher, gave a group of about twenty youngsters the task of devising some artwork that would help local charities. After discussing the project with us he decided that the task should be for the group to devise a poster that advertised BHTA and to produce some digital images for sale. The proceeds of the sale were to go to a set of charities that Toot Hill School had decided to support for their Activities Week. Robin Aldworth put together 100 digital images from the BHTA collection and delivered them to the school on a CD. They ranged from pictures of Roman pots found in Margidunum to street scenes in Edwardian Bingham and covered all aspects of Bingham's

heritage. At the beginning of the week Peter Allen gave a talk to the group to set the images into historical context. The group worked hard on the poster, but in the end they were not satisfied with it and wouldn't show it. The digital images, however, were altogether different. They were made using Photoshop and printed on high-quality A4 paper. They included some classy artwork showing that there is some real talent for this sort of work among those students. The public agreed. The images went on sale at the open day on Friday 21st July and over 60 were sold bringing in £220.50, which will go to the selected charities.

We are really pleased with this outcome. BHTA regards the information it holds as a resource to be used non-commercially by anyone in Bingham who wants it. We have now about 3000 digital images illustrating both our

activities and Bingham's heritage. The request from Toot Hill School was the first that anyone has made to use this resource. We hope that it is not the last.

FIELD WALKING GOES ON

Field walking is likely to start earlier this year than previously. We have a big challenge ahead of us. One of the farms we have still to do is only available to us this coming winter. It will be entirely wheat and if global warming does its worst and gives us a warm autumn the crops will be too thick for us to walk by mid November. So, we have to do it early, starting as soon as the wheat is through in late September and have to get as many walkers out as possible from the very start. It is potentially one of the most interesting farms in the parish. In the 1960s evidence of an Anglo-Saxon cremation cemetery was found in one of the fields. We have some evidence of an Anglo-Saxon presence in the parish, but it is scant. It will boost our knowledge considerably if we can prove the existence of this cemetery. In another field, crop marks visible on air photographs show a rectangular enclosed area that looks very like a Roman villa. If this is proved it will be the first Roman site in the parish that has not been partly or completely destroyed by development. Both of these fields will be walked early in the season. If you haven't walked with us yet and would like to join the search for a cemetery or a villa, ring Peter Allen.

Due to the unexpected closure of the Whatton Prison print-shop, the colour introduced in the June issue of the BHTA Newsletter has been dropped to reduce our print costs.

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