

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

WHAT WE FOUND IN THE FIELDS

The people of Bingham have come to know that a BHTA lecture is an event well worth attending, and this is especially so when the speaker is chairman, Peter Allen. On this occasion Peter was introduced by deputy chairman, Geoff Ashton, who told us how, in the early days of BHTA, the two of them had visited a field alongside the A46 near Newton where archaeologists from Trent & Peak Archaeology had found a Roman villa and how one of these archaeologists had come up with the idea that it would be wonderful if BHTA could field walk all the fields of the parish of Bingham. A wonderful idea it was, but Geoff also indicated that only someone with Peter's tenacity could have kept his team of field walkers constant and motivated to undertake such a vast task.

When Peter began talking, he explained that this was the first talk in a series to be continued next winter about the history of settlement in Bingham parish and was to be about field walking. He then went on to tell us that field walking is mostly a winter activity, done only on arable land; it must, of course, be with the farmer's permission and only items on the surface are collected. The finds of different types and ages were carefully recorded and their

ROMAN WELL REVEALED BY A46 ROADWORKS



This is the second Roman well to be discovered in the parish in recent years. The first had to be capped and covered by a classroom at Carnarvon School and so is unlikely to be seen again. The latest well was uncovered by the Highways Agency archaeological survey along the new route of the A46.

Having been recorded this very special relic of our local heritage is destined to be bulldozed and lost for ever. At the time of going to print BHTA has made a proposal to the Highways Agency for a rescue bid to dismantle it stone by stone and re-erect it in a public space in the town. By the time you read this we should know if they have agreed to our plan.

distribution mapped, using a computer mapping system. Peter used these maps to illustrate how it is possible to speculate with some confidence, about the way Bingham has changed over time, and the possible reasons for these changes.

The earliest artefact found is a worked flint, thought to be at least 250,000 years old if dropped in situ, but with the

possibility of it being over 450,000 years old if deposited by a glacier. The first people to live here, 10,000 to 6,000 years ago, were hunter-gatherers, who camped by the lake in the northern part of the parish, probably arriving in the spring then moving on for the winter. The first farmers came about 6000 years ago and lived near Lower Brackendale Farm leaving behind flint pieces similar to those used by



17th century Yellow Ware

North American Indians, with a variety of scrapers, arrow heads and axe heads. After that the people moved their settlements from place to place until the Bronze Age. Areas with no finds might have been woodland later cleared for planting or keeping stock.

Iron Age pottery shows that people lived near Margidunum, Parson's Hill and Lower Brackendale Farm, where crop marks indicate a possible settlement. Roman pottery is found all over the parish. Margidunum was a small Roman town and there were many small farms. Local greyware pottery was found. Mortaria made with embedded grit in it for grinding, colour-coated wares from the Nene Valley and Samian ware imported from France give evidence of a thriving trading network. Peter said that some historians were saying that there is little evidence to justify the Anglo Saxon's reputed warlike propensities, so maybe they were more settlers than warriors. In Bingham the Anglo-Saxon pottery is all found in places where there is also Roman pottery. Anglo-Saxon decorated funeral urns have been found at a cremation cemetery.

In the Middle Ages the maps show that people continued to live in settlements that had

been occupied by their ancestors as far back as the Iron Age. This changed after the Black Death. Peter used maps of the distribution of Midland Purple ware, made in the 15th and 16th centuries, and Cistercian ware from Ticknall in Derbyshire to illustrate this.

Finds from the 16/17th centuries include Yellow Ware, common throughout the 17th century, Venetian glass, clay pipes, gun flint, chamber pots and cannon balls. One of these was found at Top Brackendale, and Peter jokingly speculated that it may have fallen off the back of Prince Rupert's wagon. A large density of finds from the 18th century in one particular area, which includes kitchen waste, may have been the site of the village dump. Later centuries have yielded a far greater variety of artefacts, including exotic clay pipes, a lead loom weight, a school slate with lines already drawn, various kinds of pottery including Chinese porcelain and Willow Pattern. The practice of spreading night soil on the land now has to be included in any speculation about how the finds got into the fields and, Peter was able to show that there is still very much more to be learned. A promise for next winter's lecture series!

HOT POT SUPPER

Saturday 21st November

7.30pm W.I. Hall

Tickets £10 incl. Wine

Ring 831575

**For tickets or offers
to host a table**

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The following is a summary of the Chairman's Report tabled at the 25th June meeting.

The Heritage Lottery Fund has agreed to us extending the finishing date for the project to 31st December 2009. In April 2009 David Coe, a senior officer in the Department of Culture, Media and Sport visited Bingham to talk to members about the project. He was impressed by the work that had been done and thought that as a Lottery-funded project we had delivered excellent value for money.

The main effort this year has been on analysis of the information collected and writing the main report. Discussions have continued with the Curator of the University Museum on the storage of the finds. She has agreed to take all the collection, including the 19th century material and to keep it intact. Discussions have also resumed with Bingham Library about holding an exhibition of the project there and about the best way of depositing the Archive with them. Their attitude remains positive. A major output from the project will be a published book of maps and explanatory text describing the history of settlement of Bingham. Work on the book has now begun. Preliminary contact has been made with Ambrow, who designed and host our current web site.

Most of the tasks undertaken by BHTA have been very successful in unearthing new information concerning the history of Bingham. Our Oral History Archive is different in that it records the present for



study in the future by recording the personal histories of the ordinary people of Bingham. Our thanks go to those who have been generous and brave enough to allow us to record details of their lives. It is still the intention to continue recording oral histories, but volunteers to help are desperately needed.

Special events included stalls at the Summer and Winter Fairs and three open lectures held in January, March and May. Nine lectures were given to various local organisations and BHTA has agreed to host the 2010 AGM of the Council for British Archaeology. In discussions about future research, the committee has agreed to carry out an archaeological garden survey when the current project is finished and that field walking in fields outside the parish could be done but there are no detailed plans to continue this activity yet.

The formal part of the AGM took only a few minutes because there were no motions or elections as all the current committee had volunteered to stand for re-election. The Treasurer reported a healthy balance in the accounts, but warned of a potential, but not excessive, overspend on the project. The majority of the meeting was

devoted to three illustrated presentations giving members a preview of our findings that will be published in detail by the end of the year.

Crow Close

The field at the eastern end of Bingham, has long been considered to be the site of a deserted medieval village and has been listed as a scheduled monument since 1956. No archaeological investigations have ever been carried out there. Between 2005 and 2008 a detailed topographical survey and geophysical surveys were carried out and revealed some unexpected detail. Most surprising was the discovery of World War II installations in the western part of the field. The most prominent structures indicative of buildings both on the air photographs and the topographic survey are on the eastern side of the triangular field thought to have been the village green. Both of these structures are too big to be medieval farmsteads and wrongly orientated to be churches. The boundaries of the closes within Crow Close seem to date from more than one period. In a survey of 1450 William Porter was given as the largest freeholder in Bingham and our own work on the 1586 Manorial Survey records Robert Porter as the largest owner of the freehold

land in the township of Bingham and the occupant of what is now Crow Close. The Porter family lasted for some 300 years as well-off 'yeomen' farmers. The family died out in the 18th century when, through marriage the land passed into the estate of Sherbrooke of Oxton, near Southwell. It was thus probably that c.1754 the owners became absentees and the old family seat may have been allowed slowly to decay. The documentary evidence seems to suggest strongly that Crow Close and land around it was the estate and seat of the Porter family, though the possibility is that it may be a Tudor enclosure. This analysis does not exclude the possibility that there was an earlier settlement on the site, but the evidence for it is concealed.

Old maps

The second presentation described the mapping project that has involved the development of a conjectural map of the village together with the furlongs and closes in the surrounding open fields made from the 1586 manorial survey, which was a text without maps giving the names and holdings of tenants and freeholders. We have seen how this work informed the investigation into Crow Close and it has also revealed that over 400 years Fisher Lane is about the only road that hasn't changed its name and that the town once boasted two, long-forgotten wayside crosses. The second map for 1776 has been assembled from a series of thumbnail sketches of the scattered holdings for each tenant in the survey book drawn up for the estates of Lord Chesterfield. The 1841 Tithe map was loaned to us by Nottinghamshire County

Archive and scanned and warped to the National Grid by British Geological Survey and linked to the tithe records giving the names of tenants and details of their holding of land and properties. All the information held in the three records has been put onto a database. The maps have been linked to the database to produce occupation maps. Reports on how the work was done and interpretations of what we have discovered about life and the individuals in Bingham at the dates of the maps will be published.

What the papers say

The third and final presentation covered one activity outside the main project this year which has been research into the newspaper stories about Bingham from 1762. A team of ten readers is now working in Nottingham City Library and has progressed to 1815. This work is providing some fascinating glimpses into the lives and times of this period which frequently tie in with and shed further light into our other areas of research. As a finale to the AGM presentation this presentation provided entertaining anecdotes that were enjoyed by those attending.

The evening ended with a glass of wine and light refreshments accompanied by lively conversations prompted by the information given during the evening, much of which was new to many of the members present.



When Wynne Thompson and Judy Barlow, two of the BHTA 'scrubbers', visited the Valley of Kings on a recent holiday in Egypt they came across this scene. "Here were men sitting cross legged washing pieces of pottery, brought out from a tomb, just as we did with the finds from field walking around Bingham!"

BINGHAM BOY - VC

In the March newsletter we quoted from a letter written by Trooper Jack Gill fighting in the Boer War and listed six other 'Bingham Boys' who were serving in South Africa. We have now found a seventh local lad, Corporal Harry Churchill Beet who at the age of 27, serving with the 1st Battalion of the Derbyshire Regiment (later the Sherwood Foresters), was awarded the Victoria Cross and promoted to Sergeant for rescuing a wounded comrade while under heavy fire. Before he left South Africa in 1902 he was wounded in the shoulder and leg. Harry was born at Brackendale Farm on the 1st April 1875, son of J A Beet a sculptor. By 1881 the census lists him living in Long Acre with his mother, Elizabeth (a dressmaker), an older sister

and two younger brothers. There is no mention of his father. Soon after, the family moved to Shardlow, Derbyshire which explains why Harry doesn't appear in the list of 'Bingham Boys'. In 1906 he immigrated to Canada, becoming a farmer in Saskatchewan. At the age of 39, now with a wife and children, he enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, served in WW1 and by 1918 had attained the rank of Captain. After the war he settled in Vancouver where he died in 1946.

DON'T FORGET YOUR 2010 BHTA CALENDAR

The theme this year is
Cottages, Church and
Chapels over the years.

On sale at the
newsagents in Eaton
Place, the Parish
Church or direct from
Geoff Ashton.

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