

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

10th ANNIVERSARY YEAR

It may come as a surprise that BHTA has been going for 10 years but when we found ourselves holding our 10th Annual General Meeting on 1st July 2010, there's was no denying the fact. In this anniversary year we finished our fourth Lottery-funded project, *The History of Settlement in Bingham Parish*. We had an official opening of our exhibition in the Library in March and the launch of our book, *Bingham, Back in Time* in May. Joan Bray, a Trustee of the Heritage Lottery Fund in the East Midlands, represented the HLF on each occasion and was fulsome in her praise for the work we had done. Our website has been completely reconstructed - log on and see the difference - and the field walking finds will be handed over to the University Museum in Nottingham in October. The only part of the project yet to be finished is the transfer of all the information we have acquired onto a CD to be deposited with the County Archaeologist and other official bodies.

Other research continued despite the frantic efforts being made to finish the History of Settlement project. Hilda Smith interviewed several people for the oral history project; Geoff Ashton finished a number of house histories and put 15 of them on the new web site; Robin

A GARDEN SURVEY COULD FILL A GAP



A field walking survey of the arable fields still means that the area of the parish that had been built on leaves a large hole in our knowledge. So few archaeological digs have been done in the town that BHTA has decided to carry out an archaeological survey of the gardens in Bingham to try to fill this gap. It is our plan to divide up the town into a number of small areas. We would like volunteers in each of these areas to encourage householders to keep any bits of pottery, flints, clay pipes, glass, in fact anything man-made, when gardening. We will collect them at some later date, identify their finds and try to make sense of what these are telling us. Jane Harper in the photo, like a number of other members and non-members, started collecting after December 2008 when we first mentioned the idea. Here she is examining just a few of the hundreds of objects she has found in her garden. We will be collecting them from her, clean, record and identify them but we need a lot more finds from many more sites before we can build up an overall picture for the area of the built-up town.

Aldworth continued to collect and scan old photographs of Bingham. The research into what is recorded about Bingham in the old newspapers continued and a period of around 50 years has now been done, starting in 1765. Some amazing stories have been uncovered, which give a view of life in Bingham that can only be obtained this way. (see *Feedback*, page 3)

Members of BHTA were involved in several events during the year. We hosted

the AGM of the East Midlands branch of the Council for British Archaeology and gave three talks at it. We also took part in the AGM of the Thoroton Society and three members were involved in the development of a research strategy for archaeology in the East Midlands. In addition, several talks were given to outside organisations including one about Victorian Bingham to pupils at Carnarvon Primary School. It has been a most satisfying year.

SO, WHAT DO WE DO NEXT?

At the Association's Annual General Meeting on 1st July members discussed the research that they would like to do next and it was decided that we should publicise these proposals to the wider public in Bingham. There were two reasons for this:

a) Our research is about your heritage. 10,000 people live in Bingham and we want to give as many residents as possible a chance to put their ideas forward.

b) It may be that many more people than those currently involved in our work might like to become involved as members of the Association.

The following are some of the ideas already put forward.

ONGOING PROJECTS

There are four projects that started some time ago that we expect will continue for a while.

Oral history. This project, coordinated by *Hilda Smith*, involves interviewing Bingham residents for stories of Bingham's past. She has done over 50 interviews already, but more are planned. We would like more interviewers to help her get through the list of potential subjects.

House Histories. *Geoff Ashton* has been collecting information about the old houses in Bingham for ten years and many of the house histories he has collated are now on our web site. His main source of information is from the house deeds and he would be grateful for any information about house sales that may give him an opportunity to view the deeds of houses built before 1950.

Photo Archive. *Robin Aldworth* looks after the Association's photo-archive. We are interested in any old



Joyce Allen at the Annual General Meeting giving a presentation on the work in the newspaper archives by the research team she leads. The extracts they had found were all fascinating and ranged from the tragic to the hilarious. She concluded with a plea for more volunteers to join in the work.

photographs of Bingham or Bingham people.

Newspapers. The first newspapers to carry articles about Bingham appeared in 1765 and a team of readers co-ordinated by *Joyce Allen* has been reading the papers on microfilm in Nottingham City Library. With no radio or TV the people got most of their information about world, national and local events from the papers and the descriptions in them are very detailed.

FURTHER RESEARCH PROJECTS

The research we have done on the parish surveys of 1586, 1776 and 1841 has raised many questions, not least what happened in Bingham between those dates? To get the answers will require searching the archives. Much of the information is on microfilm copies of original documents and has to be transcribed onto databases to

create a resource for further studies such as some of those listed below.

Several themes have been identified:

Bingham's shops, trades and markets.

The three surveys tell us who among the tenants of the Bingham estate were farmers and cottagers. The newspapers and the trade directories tell us more, but there are other archival sources to be searched to help build up the story of the way Bingham changed.

Local Heroes.

For a place of its size Bingham has produced a significant number of people who have gone on to high places and others who have brought great beneficial change to Bingham. Some of these people are known to us; others almost certainly exist and are not.

Times of major change in Bingham after enclosure in 1680 which was a

traumatic experience in many communities in England. Almost nothing is known about what happened in Bingham when open field farming was replaced at the time of enclosure -

or the impact of the turnpike roads built in the 18th century where several lines of evidence suggest that Bingham was a changed place after first the turnpikes, then the canal, allowed easier travel to and from the town. These changes have not been charted or studied.

Neither of these two topics is easy to investigate, but the challenge is to find sources of information about the physical changes that took place after these events and from these make reliable inferences about changes to the local lifestyles.

Bingham at war is an area where practically nothing is known about the contribution made by Bingham men and women in the big wars of the 19th century: the Peninsula Wars, Crimea and the Boer War. Little is known about the men from Bingham who died in the First World War and there is little documented information about the physical impact of the Second World War on Bingham.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIGS

Four areas were identified by field walking that would justify closer investigation by geophysical surveying and then a dig. In addition, the work we did on the deserted medieval village in Crow Close generated information that makes a dig there a tantalizing proposition. BHTA does not have the competence to do an archaeological dig and would have to bring in professionals to lead it, but there would be an opportunity for volunteers to help and

bring the costs down. Work on any one of these five sites would be such a big enterprise that we would not embark on it without doing a considerable amount of preliminary enquiries. But it would be useful to know if any expertise already exists in the community that we could draw upon if we were to do a dig.

FEEDBACK

In the March 2009 issue of *Discovering Bingham* we published a letter discovered by our team researching the newspaper archives. The letter written on 4th December 1899 from Jack Gill was given in full under the headline 'Bingham Boys and the Boer War' and that might have been the end of the matter until in June we received the following e-mail:

'This Jack Gill was my husband's great-uncle, John Edward Gill, born in 1876 in Kinouilton. My mother-in-law (John's niece) has just gone into a care home and so we are sorting out her house. Among her things was a medal belonging to J E Gill of Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry. Imagine my surprise and delight when in my research I came across your article! In the article you raise the questions: "What happened to Jack Gill? Did he ever make it back to Bingham and receive his medal?" I can now answer those questions for you: No, I'm afraid that he didn't make it back. He died of Enteric [Typhoid fever] on 4th June 1900 and is buried at Dundee Town Cemetery, South Africa.

It's amazing what you can discover on the net in an

afternoon! I had started researching my husband's family tree, but had no idea what happened to his grandfather's brother John Edward Gill. Finding the medal and then discovering his death has ended the uncertainty. Finding your article and reading about his experiences in his own words was amazing! The letter would have been written to his father James Gill (1850-1928) and his step-mother, Elizabeth. His mother, Sarah, died in 1890. I hope this information is of interest to you. Regards, Jenny Chamberlain'



This added information was most certainly of interest and very gratifying to receive a response to items reported in our newsletter. Jenny was also kind enough to send us photos of Jack's medal and the rim inscription (reproduced above) and the memorial in Dundee Town Cemetery. Unfortunately the family does not own a picture of Jack. Could it be that one of our readers might come across a print that we could pass onto Jenny?

150th ANNIVERSARY FOR THE BUTTER CROSS

Staying with our researches in the newspaper archives, our team have found the following in the Nottingham Review dated 23rd August 1861:

'The new Market Cross is fully completed. The butter vendors have already begun to occupy its interior in the sale of their commodity.....On Tuesday the architect of the Buttercross came over with a gentleman for the purpose of taking a photograph of the building and in order to make it more interesting a number of persons were got together in the cross with baskets etc. Two or three well known tradesmen with a few old women and children also formed a group. The picture is termed a negative and prints will be published from it.'

We're looking for ideas from readers of what to do in 2011 to mark this auspicious anniversary.

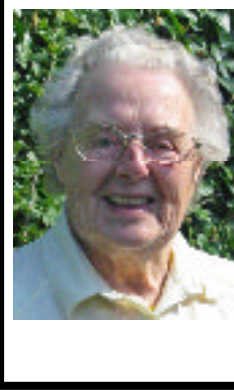
SITUATIONS VACANT

Membership of BHTA costs only a minimum of £2.00 a year.

If you would like to join us, please send an email (see below) with your contact details, which activities appeal to you and any other ideas you may have.

We would provide training, if needed, for anyone who is interested. Here are just some of the tasks that can occupy both existing and new members for as much time as they are prepared to offer:

Oral history interviewers to help get through the list of



DOT MABBOTT 1915 - 2010

It was with great sadness that we learned of the death of Dot Mabbott, after a brief illness, at the age of 95. She had lived in Bingham all her life and her memories of people and events in the town over most of the 20th century remained lucid to the end. She was also an avid collector of photographs and cuttings which made her an invaluable resource that she willingly provided to BHTA.

Dot, we will miss you.

potential subjects. We can provide the recording equipment. Also we need **Transcription typists** to get the recordings onto paper. Do you have the skills?

Newspaper Research to look through the papers on microfilm in Nottingham City Library, copying out anything that mentions Bingham. There are many papers still to be read. Most of the current team members spend one morning a week in the library.

General Research finding the information included in wills, inventories, directories, official records and the registers of births, deaths and marriages mostly held at Nottinghamshire Archives and the Nottingham Local Studies Library.

Garden Survey Area reps would start by delivering leaflets to all householders with gardens in their area. The flyer will explain the purpose of the survey and describe the types of find of interest. Then, with those who agree to take part, monitor progress and arrange to collect the finds.

Then there are important tasks for members to maintain a watching brief, for example,

with **House Histories** we are grateful for any information about house sales that may give us an opportunity to view the deeds of houses built before 1950. For our **Photo Archive** we are interested in any old photographs of Bingham or Bingham people. We would borrow them for a day or two so that we can scan them and keep a digital copy in our archive. There are also what we call **Local Archives** - from time to time local people ask us to accept collections of documents, photographs, newspaper cuttings, and so on. Such material should end up in the County archives, but the information in them is of value to us and needs to be collated by us first. We need help we can call on to do this.

Finally there is the possibility of future **Archaeological Digs** - we want to know if any expertise already exists in the community that we could draw upon if we were to do a dig and to hear from those who would be interested in the opportunity to volunteer as trainee diggers to help keep costs down.

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HOT POT SUPPER

Saturday 27th November

7.30pm W.I. Hall

Tickets £10 incl. Wine

Ring 831575