

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

CELEBRATING 700 YEARS OF THE BINGHAM MARKET CHARTER

The plans we worked on with the Bingham Town Council, as described in the March issue of the newsletter, in most part were achieved during the week starting with the Town Fair on 14th June ending at the Farmers' Market on the following Saturday. Ahead of the event, from Easter, the BHTA History Trail posters were displayed in shop windows around the Market Place and in the Medical Centre and the full Charter 700 programme, published by BTC, delivered well in advance to all households. On Friday 13th, in spite of the date, all preparations went smoothly. The 'medieval' style Butter Cross decorations of foliage garlands and wreaths, made by our two florists - Zinnia and Daisy Chain- went up with the help of Shaun Kerry's staff and our diggers removed the top soil from the two archaeological test pits so the public would see a real dig, hopefully with some finds coming to light, during the Fair. The previous Friday had been the deadline for the children's art competition which produced 114 entries over all age groups. These had been judged and all the

artwork was exhibited at the Robert Miles Infant School during the Fair.

The historic theme of the celebration was enhanced by a troupe of Medieval musicians and craftworkers together with Long Bow and Archery displays, Morris Dancers and BHTA volunteers dressed in period costumes representing, from the 14th C, Sir William de Bingham and Lady Alice, the 16th C Tudor farmer Agnes Musson and 18th C John and Elizabeth Bradshaw who had lived in the so called 'Manor House' at the east of the Market Place. More recent history was covered by the World Wars Roll of Honour displayed in the Parish church and a Hurricane flypast. The BHTA stand displayed maps and pictures illustrating the development of the Market Place, a display of finds from the current pits project and copies of the June newsletter devoted entirely to



Photos from top: BHTA volunteers work on one of the two test pits, lecture in the parish church also attended by five characters from Bingham's history and on Wednesday 18th school children entertain the crowds with singing and maypole dancing followed, in the evening, with local vocal and instrumental groups performing under the decorated Butter Cross.

reproductions of the seven century posters, which proved very popular. Jonathan Hammond agreed to us opening to the public the recently discovered 18th C bread oven on the corner with Newgate Street. All these activities were in addition to the familiar stalls, activities and displays that are regular attractions to the Town Fair but this year there was much more to come.

On Tuesday 17th in the Parish Church, Adrian Henstock gave a lecture, 'Bingham's Market and Fairs since 1314' which began with a brief history of Sir Richard de Bingham who lived in Bingham's medieval manor house and whose effigy in full armour can be seen in the church chancel. His widow Alice and their son William were granted a Charter by King Edward II for a weekly Thursday market and an annual October Fair in Bingham. Original market crosses were simple wooden structures. Some of the traders selling their wares included coopers, tanners, etc., and over time, stalls became shops. Then there would be livestock markets and the 'shambles' where butchers plied their trade. In general, markets would have been lively, noisy, smelly places.

By Victorian times an annual Statutes or Hiring Fair took place in Bingham when farm workers and servants would stand with the tools of their trade in the Market Place and be approached by prospective employers. If their discussions were fruitful, they would adjourn to a local shop and seal the deal. The worker would be paid at the end of the year. Adrian also reminded us

of other activities that took place around the Market Cross, such as wrongdoers being put into the pillory.

In 1850 seventeen ramshackle stalls were cleared to make way for the construction of Station Street. It was probably the advent of the railway that sent the market into a decline and it ceased to function by the end of the 19th century, despite the new Butter Cross being built in 1861. The Market Place was not paved over until 1960 and the regular Thursday market revived by Rushcliffe Borough Council in 1975.

The lecture, like all the other activities during the week, was attended by our volunteers wearing period costumes as a living reminder of our heritage. They were there on Wednesday afternoon mingling with a large crowd that gathered in glorious sunshine to hear the singing of the combined choirs from Robert Miles Infant and Junior Schools and Carnarvon Primary School and watch their maypole dancing. The weather held up for the evening concert under the decorated Butter Cross when a large seated audience was entertained by madrigals and folk-songs from members of the Bingham and Newark Choral Societies and the Stormy Weather Boys' sea shanties. The rest of the 90 minute programme consisted of instrumental works from The Occasional Brass Quartet and the Bingham Wind Ensemble.

The regular Thursday and the Saturday Farmers' markets were also part of the celebration programme with groups of children from the three schools coming to the Butter Cross to try their hand at pastry making under the

direction of Ian Hartland the Pieman. BHTA mounted their stall at both events, attracting a lot of interest with, on the Saturday, an additional display of the winning children's artwork and a 'Photostory' of the Charter 700 events. Our archaeological test pits were not filled in until the Friday. This was later than originally planned because what we uncovered made our diggers reluctant to stop! Although yet to be confirmed by the experts, it seems likely that we have found further evidence of the location of the Lady Alice's medieval Manor House but we will have to wait for later editions of our newsletter to report on this.

2014 FREE LECTURE SERIES COMPLETED

Bingham three feet under

In his lecture, the second in the series, on 27th March BHTA Chairman Peter Allen expanded on the report in the March edition of *Discovering Bingham*. He reminded the large audience that at the end of the History of Settlement project in 2010 there were 300 hectares of built-up Bingham in the middle of the parish which still needed investigating. In 2011 a project was started asking residents to allow us to dig a pit in their garden. The response was very encouraging. Seventy two sites were offered. In the event sixty were dug, five in Warner's Paddock, one at the Mill site, three at each of the primary and infants schools (plus the Big Dig at Robert Miles Junior School reported in the September 2013 edition), the rest were in private gardens. The pits were one metre square and usually about a metre deep.

Analysis of the finds from the pits showed the possibility of an ancient roadway line linking Jebbs Lane (an ancient hollow way) through Cherry Street to Church Lane. Pre-Roman Iron Age pottery was found in Warner's Paddock, Church Lane, Cherry Street and Fosters Lane. During the Roman period sites in Holme Road and Newgate Street joined these four. All six of them yielded finds for all periods up to the Black Death in 1348-49. There was a very high density of finds of medieval 13th and 14th century pottery, indicating a very prosperous period, which was also noted in the field-walking project. During this period the lord of the manor lived in a building at the site of Beauvale House. The absence of gritty ware (1350 - 1450) finds in pits at Foster's Lane and Warner's Paddock gives an indication of the effect of the Black Death in 1348 which more than halved the population of England. The density of finds of 17th century Cistercian Ware and Midland Yellow Ware suggest a slow recovery in population numbers.

There is good evidence that people lived in Bingham in the Iron Age, and in the Roman period. Continuous occupation can neither be proved nor disproved. The best evidence is that the village of Bingham formed in the late 9th or early 10th centuries close to what we now regard as the historic core to the south, west and east of the church.

Bingham – The Great War

We were given a timely reminder of the truly terrible conditions endured by troops during the years 1914 - 18 in Mike Patten's talk in the Methodist Hall on Thursday night 22nd May 2014.

The 100th anniversary of the beginning of World War One is being observed this year and as a project for BHTA, Mike, with a group of helpers, has been researching the War in general and in particular how it affected those Bingham residents caught up in the conflict; those who joined up, and in particular and for the purposes of the talk, those who lost their lives. Mike began his talk with photographs showing trenches and shell holes filled with water, surrounded by a sea of



black, oozing, slippery mud, illustrating the conditions in which much of the war was fought.

Six Bingham men who didn't come home, were AB Percy Hind, Pte Wm Singleton, Pts Joseph Dunsmore, Pte Frank Harris, Pte George Thornton, Pte William Mabbott Widnall, Cpl Sidney Fewster and Russell Campbell Wright, rank unknown.

Nearing the end of his talk, Mike showed photographs of local men who did come back, and told how one, when asked how it was, replied, "It was a sod!"

He then showed a photo of Wilfred Owen, also in uniform, and recited from Owen's poem that begins:

'Bent double like old beggars under sacks

Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge'

And finishes with the title of the poem:

'Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.'

Meaning 'It is sweet and noble to die for one's country'

The bitter irony of this sentiment was not lost on his listeners who are probably quite familiar with the poem, and had been extremely attentive throughout, but the very generous wave of applause was delayed for just a few moments whilst the audience brought themselves back from the horror of those days to our own peaceful world.

AGM CHANGE-OVER

At the BHTA Annual General Meeting held in the WI Hall on 27th June three members of the Executive Committee: Sue Hodson, Jack Wilson and Hilda Smith had expressed the wish to step down. In thanking them on behalf of the Association the Chairman noted with pleasure that their joint skills and experience would not be lost as all three planned to continue their membership. Sue had joined the EC in 2011 and had made important contributions to our activities. Jack, our Honorary Secretary had been co-opted onto the EC soon after we started in 2000 and took over from Hilda as Secretary in 2002. However, without Hilda, BHTA would not exist, it was only due to her single minded determination during 1999; bending ears, writing letters and convening ad hoc meetings that the Association was officially inaugurated in April 2000.

Presentations were made to Sue and Jack at the meeting but unfortunately Hilda was unwell so the Chairman visited her the following day. As part of the formal AGM the nominations of David Mason as Hon. Sec. Joyce Allen re-

joining and new EC member Pam Richmond were unanimously agreed. After an illustrated presentation of his Chairman's report Peter Allen introduced David who described the launch of the BHTA Facebook page, Mike Patten on aspects of our research into WW1 and Geoff Ashton told us about Boot Alley. Finally in true BHTA tradition the nibbles came out and the wine flowed to celebrate the close of another successful AGM.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Hilda's early memories

I suppose mostly it began when I accompanied my sister to a Millennium Award ceremony in Birmingham where her group received funding to replace the Norman Cross eagle; the original having been stolen.

It was a prestigious affair, the main speaker being Chris Smith, Sports Minister at that time, and many of the awards were for projects with a sporting theme. I spoke to a number of people about varied projects, but one especially interested me - the development of a millennium green in a tiny village near Birmingham and from them I learned that money was available from the Local Heritage Initiative (LHI) to improve or enhance local areas. Consequently, as soon as I arrived home I phoned

them and spoke to a charming and helpful young woman who also gave me the exciting news that the LHI were to make Bingham their headquarters. By now I had determined that if money was available, then some of it should come Bingham's way. I therefore set about contacting everyone I knew and many that I didn't know at that point, but who later became good friends.

I had to prove that there was local interest in the scheme, and being fairly confident that I had aroused some curiosity at least, I called an open meeting. This was so poorly attended that I almost threw in the towel, but was persuaded to persevere, and I'm so thankful I did, for as a result we managed to put together a wonderful committee. Our first job was to bid for funding and in this we succeeded. From the first I had used the title Bingham Heritage Trails Association, because I had begun with the idea of setting out heritage trails that would trace the archaeological, built and natural history of the area, beginning at Margidunum. The first set of trail leaflets were duly conceived and printed and since then the BHTA Committee have tackled many things and are now a force to be reckoned with in our Community...

NEW ARRIVAL AT THE LINEAR PARK



It is not for the first time that the Linear Park has attracted rare species; the Grizzled Skipper and Green Hairstreak butterflies are found in only a handful of habitats in Nottinghamshire, including Bingham. It now seems that they have been joined by the Marbled White butterfly which became extinct in the county for 120 years. Jenny Craig, secretary of the Friends of Linear Park last July spotted a Marbled White which is about the same size as the Small Tortoiseshell. There were other scattered sightings in the south of the county but it was thought these were strays from established colonies in disused limestone quarries the nearest of which are as far away as Stamford. Bill Bacon, who chairs the Friends, feels that several sightings this year suggest that there is a chance that the Marbled White could become established. It is attracted to the type of grassland that may be found on a disused railway line such as the Linear Park where the ballast laid when the line was in use provides some similarity to the limestone and chalk land areas preferred by this species. It is now too late to see it this year but be on the look-out through July and into August in 2015.

BHTA CONTACTS

General e-mail: bhta@binghamheritage.org.uk

 www.facebook.com/binghamheritage

CHAIRMAN: Peter Allen - 01949 831575

VICE CHAIRMAN: Geoff Ashton - 01949 875177

SECRETARY: David Mason - 01949 876635

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Robin Aldworth - 01949 839991

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