

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

CHAIRMAN STEPS DOWN AFTER 15 YEARS



At this year's AGM on 18th June John Perry, who has served on the Executive Committee for 10 years, and Peter Allen, the BHTA inaugural Chairman since 2000, announced that they had decided to step down. To mark the occasion presentations were made. The photo above shows Peter (left) receiving a replica medieval tile with a design based on the initials of the association and a bound volume of photographs and messages of appreciation from members and friends as well as a framed photomontage of events during his years in office. The meeting agreed the nomination of Geoff Ashton as the new Chairman and welcomed Veronica Perry and Richard Barnett who now join the Committee.

MEET OUR NEW CHAIRMAN

"After 15 years at the helm Peter will be a hard act to follow," says new Chairman Geoff Ashton (above), "after 15 years as deputy chairman I do at least know what is going on and where we have come from!" Like many members of BHTA Geoff has no real background in history or archaeology, being a sociologist by academic background and a computer manager (not doer!) in the last years of his employment with British Coal Opencast Executive at Mansfield. He picked up a smattering of the practical use of spreadsheets, data bases and electronic mapping which has come in useful on most of our big projects so far, so if he has a specialism that is it - his staff who did the real work at the

Opencast Executive would be amazed! In delivering HLF projects team members are supposed to learn things as well as deliver the result. It is called 'outcomes for people' and in many cases, as well as Geoff's, this requirement has more than been met!

As a member of the National Trust, Geoff's other main interest is in old buildings, again very much as an amateur. Hence the inclusion of house history studies in our HLF projects and the research into Bingham house deeds that is still on-going; so far there are 32 on the web site. "If any one has any to contribute please let us know", says Geoff. This interest plus a concern for the future of the building led to his becoming Chairman of the Friends of Bingham Manor House. Sometimes it is not always clear to which organisation Geoff is referring when he says "We are...!"

Where next for BHTA? Well, he says he won't be doing 15 years, there is not time! BHTA will need a younger Chairman in a few years time to carry on the tradition of being a research-based organisation. Next possibilities are a dig at Crow Close, the sieving of trenches in the churchyard where a box hedge is to be planted and completing the World War 1 research, for which he is web coordinator. Maybe we could revisit the Bingham family genealogy

charts already on the web now we have access to 1911 census and we have the parish registers on our data bases. He might be looking for volunteers to research other organisational archives to trace the development in Bingham of common services we tend to take for granted but know little about – post office, electricity, water, gas and the like. Members out there may have projects to suggest – let us hear about your ideas please.

BINGHAM'S MYSTERIOUS DESERTED VILLAGE? Crow Close.

This was the title of the third lecture of the season delivered by Peter Allen and Adrian Henstock to an audience of eighty people on June 4th. Crow Close is the hummocky field on Cogley Lane and backs onto Abbey Road and Carnarvon Primary School. In 1851 the field was described as having streets, lanes and fields. In 1908 it was closely examined and drawings done. The proposal was made that this was the site of a deserted medieval village but archaeologists paid little attention to it.

After the war the RAF did an aerial survey of the UK and archaeologists who studied the evidence concluded that something had been going on! There were six rings that were clearly visible but what were they? The manipulated images showed ridge and furrow as well as building outlines, roads and fields. By 1956 experts were convinced that a deserted village existed and the site was declared a protected monument.

What other evidence was there of a deserted village?

1913 Ordnance Survey maps showed that Bingham was built on a grid pattern. Crow Close is out on a limb but there is a right of way all the way from the Market Square. An 1835 map of Bingham shows Crow Close belonged to William Pacey and was not part of the Chesterfield Estate. The parish maintained the route to the field. A 1586 map showed a 'black hole' around Crow Close, which had been freehold land for centuries, but a reference to it in the manorial survey indicated that it was freehold owned by Robert Porter. **Was Crow Close the site of the Chapel of St James, referred to in 1851?** There is no evidence of a chapel and possibly this was an error by the scribe writing about St Helen's Chapel on Kirk Hill. **Was Crow Close the site of houses, abandoned after the plague known as the Black Death in 1348-9?** There is no information about the number of Bingham residents who died as a result but it is known that Belvoir was affected. There were later outbreaks, and records show

that 46 people died in Bingham in 1646. The conclusion was made that it is unlikely that the buildings were abandoned after the plague.

In 2005, topographical and geophysical surveys were undertaken by BHTA. 3D Laser Mapping did a survey of the whole field and created an image showing ridge and furrow, buildings, roadways and the mysterious circular structures identified previously. The geophysical survey, carried out over selected areas, measured variations in the magnetic properties of the soil and the resistivity survey showed information about previously identified features. When the three maps were put together it became apparent that some of the small buildings that were thought to be cottages did not have evidence of hearths and may not have been lived in. The large circular shapes were identified when it was discovered that they had the dimensions of searchlights stations from World War II. Some residents had memories of Nissan huts



The large audience joined in a lively discussion at the end of the talk.

in the field. Smaller circular shapes could have been platforms for artillery but there was no memory of gunfire. It seems that part of Crow Close contained debris from World War II, which may be masking evidence of earlier occupation.

Crow Close is now not thought to be the site of a Deserted Medieval Village. The surveys showed that the two large buildings were orientated the wrong way to be churches and are likely to be big houses, one older than the other, the small buildings are likely to be barns and other estate properties, the roads are likely to be service roads for the big house and the field boundaries are all later than the medieval ridge and furrow. Evidence from records indicates that the Porter family owned this land from 1450-1754 while the family were living in Bingham and acquiring land. They maintained a low profile and very little is known about them except that in 1685 Richard Porter owned the second largest house in Bingham and it had six hearths. The only area in Bingham where this house could have been was Crow Close. Records show that Bingham Hall was abandoned in 1754 and demolished between 1790 and 1835.

In conclusion, Crow Close is not the site of a village but of an independent estate farmhouse/mansion built in Tudor or Stuart times and the remains are of a house, outbuildings and workers cottages of various dates. Only an archaeological excavation of the site could reveal more information! Watch this space!!

ODD THINGS CROP UP DURING RESEARCH

We are currently putting together the site reports for all 60 archaeological pits we dug in people's gardens and elsewhere. We include in these a "site history" to explain what we know of the use of the site since 1586, the earliest evidence we have from the "Bingham Back in Time" work. The history is intended to make an interesting read for the house holder and also, in some cases, to help inform the analysis of finds in the pit. Quite often, old maps hint at the origins of old building rubble, such as the former school run by John Strong on the corner of Cherry Street and Church Street or the old workshops that were scattered around Bingham in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Two unexpected findings have occurred during this process relating to unsuspected changes of boundaries. Usually, as more modern infill creates new plots of land, the pre-existing boundaries of the original site are generally retained. We have had two unexpected examples where this has not happened.

Our pit (LA12) at Regency House, on the corner of



Regency House

Cherry Street and Long Acre proved to be on land that has only been a part of the Regency House plot since 1920. In 1910 the plot occupied by Regency House was 460 sq. yds. It is now 760 sq. yards. On the builder's plans the area occupied by the Cherry Street houses (numbers 2 - 8) amounted to 2000 sq. yds. In 1910 the orchard on which they were built measured 2300 sq. yds. Thus 300 square yards of orchard must have been added to the Regency House plot at the time of sale. On the ground, a giveaway sign is the end of the old garden wall on Cherry Street! The hatched area on the map shows the added land.



Porchester Farm House

We had always assumed that the footprint of Porchester Farm House, on Long Acre, at the time of the 1841 tithe map was not the same as it is now. Playing around with the various maps for a pit behind one of the Porchester Villas has shown that when the terrace of houses, to the left, was built in about 1885, a "spare" strip of land was added to the farmhouse plot - the blue rectangle on the map. Thus the footprint of the house has not changed since

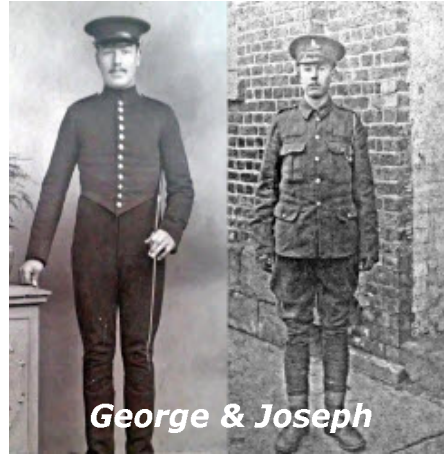
1841, which suggests that perhaps the farmhouse is a little older than might be thought. Perhaps the farmer wanted a bit more privacy or perhaps there was not room for another pair of houses.

WE LAUNCH OUR WW1 WEBSITE

For the past year we have been researching our project 'Bingham and World War 1' - its effect upon the town and its people. Last month the first tranche of our findings was sent to our website master, Ambro. To celebrate this event a "launch" evening was held at Bingham library to which we invited representatives of various organisations and individuals who had helped us. Geoff Ashton opened the evening by welcoming all and giving a brief outline of the format of the evening.

Mike Patten thanked the various organisations such as the Heritage Lottery Fund; Sherwood Foresters Museum; British Legion as well as members of the BHTA and the public who had provided photos, stories and papers relating to their ancestors. To illustrate some of our emerging findings he related the story of Richard Henshaw's two sons. Both were killed - one on the Somme and one drowned in the Mediterranean after his

ship was torpedoed - as recorded on the side stones of Richard Henshaw's grave in Bingham cemetery. There was also the story of the three Marriott sons - two of whom signed up on the same day - George and Joseph. George



was killed near Arras but Joseph survived and we have still to trace the 3rd brother - Samuel. George was described on his medical report as "the original country bumpkin" which perhaps describes the class divide at the time. Neither Joseph nor Samuel is on the Roll of Honour which begs the question - why? We also found three other soldiers who were in the Sherwood Foresters with strong connections to Bingham and were killed but they are not on the war memorial. Details have been passed to the British Legion for their consideration.

Geoff explained the concept of the website and the findings

we are putting on it. We did not rush in on the anniversary of the start of the conflict but concentrated on research of service and family records to get a fuller picture. To this was added information from newspapers, school logs, parish magazines and family memories. The website has always been our medium of choice. We feel that books were too finite; they cannot easily be amended or updated once printed whereas a website can be continuously updated. We are not telling a story but building a resource so that people can follow their own path. One interesting aspect to arise is that two sides of a family, who were unaware of each other's existence, were brought together through our research into their grandfather's involvement.

There is still a fair way to go before we can provide a full service and family history for the survivors and we still want any new family material that comes to light. In the meantime please visit our web site. The address can be found on the header of the front page of this newsletter. On the home page, just click on 'Bingham at War' and then 'World War 1' to get into the project. If you find any errors or spelling mistakes please let Geoff or Mike know.

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2016 LECTURES

Next year's FREE lectures are being planned at the moment. Look out for the December 2015 newsletter for dates, topics and venues.