

DISCOVERING BINGHAM

Quarterly NEWSLETTER of the **Bingham Heritage Trails Association**
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BHTA Spreads the Word

Welcome to the first issue of the quarterly BHTA newsletter.

It will be distributed to all members of the Association, but we aim to make it freely available to the public in the Library, our display in the Old Court House and at other points around the town. The Newsletter will keep you up to date with work currently being done by the Association, tell you about our future plans for heritage research and public events and report any interesting heritage news.

Last winter BHTA ran a series of public lectures. This was made possible by a generous grant from Bingham Local Area Forum. We were very anxious about it. Anyone of you who has organised an event will know what it feels like in that last half-hour, when you are wondering if anyone will turn up. As it happened, the events attracted audiences of 45, 54 and 99 for the three lectures. This has given us confidence to set up three more for the coming winter when we hope that attendance will be even higher. This is important to us, because we are registered as an educational charity and we do take seriously our remit to raise awareness of Bingham's heritage in the community at large.

The idea for the lectures came from a member at the 2002 Annual General Meeting. We are always open to ideas like that. If you have any that will help us fulfil our remit, write in. See page four, for a list of BHTA contacts.

Archaeology of Bingham

One of the most intriguing mysteries about Bingham surrounds the story of Crow Close.

This field, between Cogley Lane and Carnarvon School, has been known to be the site of a deserted Medieval village since 1909, but when and why it became deserted is not known. An information board on Cogley Lane tells some of the story, but much is still unknown. Signs of the village are clearly visible on the ground and on aerial photographs, but the site has never been accurately surveyed. BHTA has been looking at ways of raising money to do a survey and we have been in discussions about it with all relevant people and organisations, including the Local Heritage Initiative, who fund our current project. The LHI provides no more than 40% of the total cost of a project. The remaining 60% can be made up of volunteer labour costs, which they allow us to charge at the rate of £50 a day. The main problem we face with surveying Crow Close, which needs to be

undertaken by professionals, is that there is little scope to provide such a large amount of volunteer effort to accompany it.

A way round this is to incorporate the survey of Crow Close into a larger project. The one BHTA have in mind is an archaeological field-walking survey of the whole of the parish. The way in which these are conducted is for trained volunteers to walk the ploughed fields looking for archaeological artefacts. They walk along parallel lines 10m or 20m apart and when they see anything of interest the find spot is located using an electronic measuring device. Some of the items will be taken away for precise analysis and identification. We know from previous work here that items from the Late Palaeolithic through to the Medieval period have already been found in the parish. Very few archaeological field-walking surveys have been done in Nottinghamshire and Mike Bishop, the county archaeologist, is keen that more should be done.

As both the Crow Close survey and the field-walking will be winter activities, our plan is to



1949 Aerial view of Crow Close from the north-east (Photo: Rushcliffe B. C.)

submit an application for funding early in 2004. Work could then begin in the winter of 2004/2005.

What are you doing during the winter of 2004/05?

These are high-risk activities for BHTA. We need the goodwill and support of the farmers and landowners, but to carry it out we will need to be able to draw from a pool of about 24 volunteers. Only with this level of support can we be sure of a team of at least six in the field at any one time. There will be just a small time window, during the winter months, when the ground conditions will be ideal. We will only go ahead and apply for funds when we are sure that we have sufficient volunteers. We are starting to compile a list of potential volunteers NOW! If you are interested in taking part, please let us know. (see page 4)

New Roman Villa

An exciting new archaeological find has recently been confirmed on Crown Estates land near Bingham, only yards from the proposed A46 dual carriageway.

The existence of the Roman settlement of Margidunum (Castle Hill) at the northern extremities of our parish has been known for many years. The site, adjacent to the junction of the A46 and A6097, was extensively excavated in the 1920s by Felix Oswald and in the 1960s by Malcolm Todd, from Nottingham University, prior to the construction of the roundabout. These 'digs' established that this was the site of a Roman staging post on the Fosse Way that linked Exeter and Lincoln. The town was first settled around AD50-55 and was developed and extended up to the fourth century. At its peak, it would have extended along the line of the Fosse for at least a kilometre. Both excavations recorded several substantial

buildings. Oswald also referred to a 'large villa' to the south-west but did not give a precise location. Todd concentrated on the immediate area of the road development and so did not attempt to find the villa.

In the 1960s, official disinterest in the archaeological heritage of sites earmarked for road development resulted in an estimated loss of one third of the site when the roundabout was built. Fortunately, today, the Highways Agency have a more enlightened view and a team from the Trent and Peak Archaeological Unit carried out a number of surveys along the route of the proposed road improvements. What they found is believed to be the remains of a fourth century Roman villa less than one kilometre south-west of the 'Margidunum' roundabout. The team of investigators first spotted an abundance of tiles, slates and pottery. This prompted a more detailed geophysical survey, a technique not available to Oswald and Todd. From this a map of the original building has been drawn showing an area 150m x 50m described as, 'a Roman villa of some major substance, including a courtyard and the dwelling that would have been there'. The road improvement scheme goes close to the site but it is not thought it will adversely affect these important remains.

Let us hope this is true, as further work is needed to answer the intriguing questions raised by this discovery. Archaeologists would expect a town like Margidunum to have a villa but not one so large as hinted at by Oswald and confirmed by the latest survey. Bingham also has two other possible villa sites; one under Carnarvon School and another to the south-east which, from aerial photographs, appears to be a large rectangular structure. Neither site has yet been excavated but if there are three villas, this indicates a high degree of Roman activity in the area that

no one has yet been able to explain.

Did you Know ?

- Langtrey Gardens is named after 'the Jersey Lily', the famous actress and beautiful mistress of the Prince of Wales, later to become Edward VII. She often visited the town in the 1870s as the guest of the Rev. Robert Miles' son, Frank. It seems the Victorians were not so straight-laced after all!
- Frank Miles also planted the Gingko tree in the churchyard.
- There are 27 different kinds of tree in the Bingham cemetery.
- There are hedges in Bingham planted in Tudor times, when Long Acre was called Husbandman Street.
- That February 2003 was the warmest in Bingham since February 1869.
- There are 150 year-old trees on Parson's Hill.
- Purging buckthorn, spindle, dogwood and guelder rose all occur naturally in Bingham's hedges.
- It cost £8 4s 8d to buy a lime-light lantern, gas apparatus and fittings in 1872. Limelight used an oxy-hydrogen flame to heat a block of quicklime to incandescence.
- Bingham's first Penny Bank was set up in the church school room in 1873. It paid 5% interest on deposits from 5/- to £10.
- The price of coal rose from 10/9d a ton in 1870 to 23/- a ton in 1873.

An Evening of Wine Tasting
with Jack Wilson

Old Grapes - New Wines

Robert Miles INFANT School Hall
7.30 pm. to 11 pm.
Friday 28th November 2003

Tickets £8 each
(including light food)



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Do YOU know?

The column where BHTA asks if you have any information on topics we are researching. Please contact the Editor if you do.



- This wheeled hut appears at various positions on picture postcards taken of the Market Place in the early 1900s. Do you know what purpose it served?



- Recently, when the ivy was cleared off the wall at the east end of the Old Court House in Church Street, these carved stone heads were revealed. We are consulting experts on the age and possible origin of the carvings but we would also like to hear from readers if they have any information, or theories.



- So far we have located three houses with original Victorian

floor tiles in the hallway. Two of the houses were built around 1910 and the third, although much older, is obviously the result of a Victorian 'make-over' at around the same time. Each has an individual pattern and colour scheme and we are on the lookout for other examples. If you know of one, please let us know.

Birds and Leaves.

Calling any budding – or actual – phenologists.

Browsing through some old Bingham Parish Magazines of the mid 1870's there were frequent references to the weather and, in the Spring months to the arrival of swallows, the first hearing of the cuckoo and to which of the oak and the ash produced its leaf buds first. In Autumn the first signs of the swallows departing was noted.

In 1870 swallows arrived on the 17th April, the cuckoo was first heard on the 21st April and the oak leaf was out before the ash. The swallows departed on the 25th September. In 1873 swallows were again first seen on the 17th April, but the cuckoo was not heard until the 2nd May. The oak leaf was out two weeks before the ash. In that year swallows went away on the 15th September. 1874 saw the swallows arrive on the 22nd April, the cuckoo was heard on the 24th, the oak leaf was out by the 28th April but the ash leaf did not appear until the 15th May.

Such events are, of course, closely related to the weather at the time. It is these kind of relationships the phenologists study. If there is anyone in Bingham who keeps such records – of the weather and events such as the arrival and departure of migrant birds and the growth and budding of trees and flowers, BHTA would like to hear from you.

Getting it Taped

Chatting to some of the interviewees for the Oral History Archive, is proving an interesting and stimulating pastime.



Sue Clayton, trainer for the Oral History Project group, seen here with Hilda Smith, project leader and a group of trainees

Bingham can be proud to have such a remarkable bunch of people amongst its citizenry. It would be wonderful to have the resources to interview everyone in town, but as this is not possible, we are trying to pick a good representative number.

Apart from what they have to say on tape, it is obvious that their expertise covers a wide spectrum. For example:

Would you know how to police a large group of people at a demonstration in the town?

Could you have been a political agent for someone like Richard Crossman, he of the famous diaries, and Housing Minister in the Wilson government?

Did you know, that whilst church bell-ringing is a mentally stimulating activity, contrary to general belief, it requires no great physical strength?

We are also learning more about the Bingham of yesteryear. Those who have always lived in Bingham, may be old enough to remember that cattle were once mustered at what is now the Bowls Club, before being herded down to the station, to catch a train for Nottingham cattle market.

They may also remember how much the Bishops Gelsthorpe

and Lasbury and their curate, Peter Lillingstone did for the children of the town.

If you know of someone who you feel makes a contribution to the life of Bingham town today, or has made a contribution in the past, please let us know (see below), as these are the people we wish to interview.

Stretch Your Legs

We offer the healthy way to get to know the area.

One of the projects the BHTA is currently involved with is the production of a leaflet detailing a number of walks within the parish of Bingham. These range in length from just over 2 miles to nearly 7 miles. The leaflet will

highlight the routes, notable features, both man-made and natural, the terrain and, where appropriate, somewhere to get some refreshment. Later this year, when the leaflet is produced, it will be available, free of charge, from the Library, Court House and the Association.



A walk in the Bingham Linear Park is just one of those to be featured in the forthcoming BHTA Trails leaflet.

HOW TO CONTACT OUR OFFICERS, PROJECT LEADERS AND PROJECT CO-ORDINATORS (★)

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

Name	Office/Projects	Address/Telephone
ALDWORTH Robin	COMMITTEE, Newsletter Editor Architectural photography Period scenes	30 Mallow Way 839991 Fax./Ans. Ph. 839984
★ ALLEN Peter	CHAIRMAN, Prehistoric, Roman, Medieval to Modern periods, Agriculture, Farm implements, Hedge & Tree surveys, Geology, Museum.	107 Grantham Road 831575
ALLEN Joyce	COMMITTEE Membership & Minutes Secretary	107 Grantham Road 831575
★ ASHMOR E Allen	COMMITTEE Leaflets, Wartime	73 Langdale Grove 837886
★ ASHTON Geoff	VICE CHAIRMAN, Built heritage, House histories, Street names Evolution – maps, Population	19 Church Street Phone/Fax. 875177
BACON Bill	Natural history, Linear Park, Tree survey, Photographic survey	4 The Pinfold 838585
BANNARD John	COMMITTEE	17 Market Place 831286 / Fax: 836083
BEAR Rupert	Crime & punishment	8 Melvyn Drive 837213 / 875846
PERRY John	Trail leaflets Transport	29 Cogley Lane 875231
SHARPE Eric	Wartime	34 Tythby Road 838843
★ SMITH Hilda	COMMITTEE Oral histories	11 Abbey Road 837781
SNOWDIN Roger	TREASURER Commercial development	26 Gillotts Close 839148
STOCKWOOD Tony	COMMITTEE Town Council Representative	46 Tythby Road 875778
★ WILSON Jack	SECRETARY Natural History	3 Quantock Grove 838275

Transport of Delight

BHTA study into the history of transport in and around Bingham.

We are researching details of the local railways, bus services, roads and the development of road transport and canals. If anyone has any information including photographs and press cuttings, these would be most welcome. If you have specialist knowledge, or interest in, any aspects of transport in the locality, please get in touch. Once the study is complete details will be placed on the BHTA website.

HOUSE HISTORIES

There is a lot we can learn from the DEEDS and other documents related to the older properties in the town. If you think you have anything of interest, please contact **GEOFF ASHTON**

BINGHAM AFTER THE ROMANS

First in the second series of BHTA Open Lectures sponsored by BLAF

7.30pm
11th December 2003
Robert Miles JUNIOR
School Hall

Speaker:
MIKE BISHOP
Chief Archaeological Officer
for the Nottinghamshire
County Council