

# DISCOVERING BINGHAM

Quarterly NEWSLETTER of the **Bingham Heritage Trails Association**  
www.binghamheritage.org.uk Registered Charity No: 1090475 Issue No.5 September

BHTA: Increasing public awareness of our heritage in Architecture, Folk & Natural History, Archaeology & Geology

## FIRST ANNIVERSARY

This edition marks the first year of BHTA's newsletter. Most of this issue will be concerned with our future plans but we are starting with a reminder of Bingham's past.

This pair of photographs, taken about 100 years apart, is one of 15 comparisons on the 'Then and Now' section of our web site. To the left is an oblique view of the buildings on the south side of the Market Place starting at No. 27, now the National Westminster Bank, No. 28, Cranmer House and Nos. 29-31 the hairdressers and furnisners shops. Then comes the only four-storey building in the Market Place, No. 32, that is now 'The Flower Shop'. The shops and houses beyond to the corner with Market Street were demolished in the early 1960s to build the Co-op.

The buildings seen ahead, on the west side, start with part of the gable end of No. 2 Market Street. In 1910, this single-storey building was Downing's, later Hopkinson's, butcher's shop and is now part of the DIY Handicentre. Next door is No. 1 Market Place, the shop would have been Edwin Hitchcock, watchmaker and jeweller in 1910 and in 2003 is Bird's bakery. On this frontage, white paint has been used to pick out the decorative timber (not stone!) window lintels and to imitate cornerstones (coigns) at the

sides of the facade, that were not there in 1910.

All the remaining buildings visible on this side of Market Place in 1910, partly obscured by trees and the Butter Cross, are a mixture of shops and cottages with arched alleyways leading through to allotments on Fair Close. Of the shops, the Post Office was located here from 1850 until 1936. Many of the buildings on the western side of Market Place were cleared

in the late 1960s to erect Eaton Place, only Nos. 11 and 11a remain, towards Newgate Street, giving some idea of the appearance of the earlier buildings. On the north side, the end of the chequer-board brickwork block, Nos. 13 to 16, is unchanged except for the shop fronts. For the rest of the 1910 postcard, the Market Place is unpaved. The first paving was laid in 1960, since then it has been subject to a number of alterations.



## **FUTURE PROJECTS**

As in the past, the Association's AGM, held in June, was followed by an open meeting to discuss ideas for the future. At the AGM itself there was one change to the committee. Allen Ashmore retired and was replaced by Adrian Henstock who recently retired as County Archivist. Allen was one of the founding members of the Association. With his knowledge of Bingham, his involvement was invaluable and the Association is extremely grateful for all he has done in the last four years.

In the open meeting there was no shortage of ideas for what will be the third major work programme undertaken by BHTA. In the end it was decided to go for one big project, **The history of Settlement in Bingham**, for which funding will be sought this summer. The main output will be a book of parish and town maps covering all the periods from the Palaeolithic to the present. Some of the information needed to make them is already available in archives, including the Earl of Chesterfield's Survey Book of 1776, the earliest known mapping in Bingham. There are also Sanderson's map of 1832, the Tithe map of 1842 and the various early Ordnance Survey maps.

The biggest challenge will be to make sense of the periods of settlement before 1776. For this three actions are envisaged. One is to do an archaeological field-walking survey of the whole parish collecting anything that might give information about the pattern of settlement and land use in the parish from

prehistoric times to the late eighteenth century. This idea has been discussed for over a year and a list of over thirty volunteers who are prepared to walk the fields has been assembled. If you are not on it and would like to be involved please let us know. The second activity is to do a detailed survey of Crow Close, which has been known to be a deserted Medieval village since 1909, but has never been surveyed in detail. The third, is to devise a conjectural map of the parish from a written account in Medieval Latin done in 1586. Work on this was started at a WEA course organised by Val Henstock in January 2003. We now aim to finish it. If anyone who attended that course would like to take part in this exercise then do let us know. Even those who didn't attend the course, particularly if they are familiar with Medieval Latin, would be very welcome! Our aim is to put in a bid by mid September and to begin work this winter. Volunteers are needed!!

## **PROJECT 3 PLUS**

BHTA is aware that, with the exception of brief items in '*Discovering Bingham*', our occasional exhibitions and public lectures, most of the information we have produced, so far, is only available to those with access to the Internet. For this reason, at the open meeting that followed out AGM in June, we looked at ways of widening public awareness of Bingham's rich heritage. The discussion prompted several interesting suggestions. The first of these was that we should look at ways of presenting some aspects of our history through

performance events. This would involve talents that are not necessarily included, at the moment, within the association.

### **So, are there any budding dramatists out there?**

We would like to hear from any individual authors, or Writer Groups, who would be interested in discussing the possibility of using any of the historical and social heritage information on our web site as the basis for a play or pageant for eventual performance in the town. The historical subjects covered so far include Iron age, Roman, Anglo Saxon, Medieval, Victorian and Wartime periods, life in the 1870s from local school log books and Parish magazines, Crime and Punishment, the development of local agriculture, transport and the streets and buildings of the town. There is certainly no shortage of material to spark the imagination of authors.

The dramatisation of events, real or imaginary, from our history is only one of the ideas that came up in the AGM discussion. Another was to produce specific sections of the web site in book form. In some cases these might be published commercially while in others, the material would be bound and lodged at local reference libraries. Another approach could be to collect material that might be compiled as information boards carrying text and illustrations of, for example, the local Natural History over the seasons for permanent display at suitable sites. If any of these ideas are to get off the ground, the BHTA

would need to liaise with other local organisations. These could include, schools and other youth groups, those interested in family and local history, art, natural history, gardening, walking, etc. **Anyone interested in these ideas, or with other ideas of their own, are urged to contact Peter Allen** (see page 4).

So, Project 3 is about to get underway but some elements of our earlier projects, such as Oral Histories and Built Heritage will continue.

**DID YOU KNOW ?**



**Costs only £2.00 a year**

**RING 831575 NOW!**

## IT'S ON THE WEB

*Continuing our series of reviews of topics covered on the BHTA web site, the following can be found in the 'Natural Bingham' section.*

### Trees in Bingham

Trees are as much a part of our heritage as old buildings. No one appreciated this more than Elizabeth Jaques, who died in July. It was she, with friends and the Bingham U3A Nature Study Group, who did the survey of Bingham's trees for the BHTA web site. It is a reflection on the way she did everything that they are as thorough and detailed as they are. We thank her for that.

The oldest tree that we have been able to date is an English oak in a hedgerow within Top

Brackendale Farm around 215 years old. There are solitary trees in fields where once there were farm buildings and many willow trees in the fields mark where once there was a pond.

The nearest that Bingham has to an arboretum is the cemetery in The Banks. The idea that collections of trees should double as cemeteries is credited to Joseph Paxton, the mid nineteenth century head gardener at Chatsworth House and the man who built the Crystal Palace in 1851. He was commissioned to redesign Coventry municipal cemetery in 1846, where he put this idea into practice. In Bingham cemetery, which opened in 1888, there are around 40 different species among the 150 trees and shrubs in it. Among them are Bhutan pine, Corsican pine, Douglas fir, Lawson cypress and deodar, or Himalayan cedar.

Many interesting trees are to be found in small copses planted in the 1970s and later. Along the north side of the railway line eastwards from the A46, for example, Hungarian oak, red oak and hornbeam have been planted. The weighbridge at Saxondale roundabout contains, among the scrub that has been planted there, the only known specimen of alder buckthorn in the parish. There are white poplar and sweet chestnut in the plantation at the top of Tithby Road. Even the street trees are interesting. Norway maple, Swedish whitebeam and whitebeam are all quite common and there are plane trees in the Market Place. The least common trees may occur in unexpected places.



The only known example of narrow-leaved ash in the parish (see photo) stands behind the letterbox on the corner of Market Place and Market Street. It has stunning deep red autumn colours. There is a ginkgo in the churchyard, said to have been planted by Frank Miles, the artist son of the Rev. Robert Miles, and near it is the only known example of Tibetan cherry in a public space in Bingham. On the corner of Market Place and Church Street, outside the estate agents, is a false acacia, one of three in the parish. There is a tremendous diversity of trees in private gardens. These have not been surveyed, but some unusual ones can be seen from the street. The beautiful Wellingtonia and the mulberry tree in the front garden of Porchester House, opposite the bowls club are two of them.

## BINGHAM SUMMER FAIR

As usual the BHTA stand was at this year's fair in the Market Place on 12<sup>th</sup> June and it attracted a lot of interest among the many visitors. There was a great deal of new material to display following



Visitors at the BHTA stand.

the launch of our enlarged web site at the end of March. To accommodate this, the display stands were arranged so that both sides could be used and at the end of the day the exhibition was moved to the library where it remained for the week of the Bingham Festival.

For BHTA, the whole event was a great success as several new members joined the association and we made contact with house owners who had access to the deeds

of their property and others who had memories of the town or interesting artefacts that we will be able to photograph. All these contacts will be followed up in the coming months and any new information will appear on the web site, and other media, in due course. Our thanks to everyone who supported us.

## MAD APOTHECARY

*An extract from a local press report dated May 1953.*

When Miss A. L. Wortley, the retired schoolmistress embarked on writing "A History of Bingham," she found, as she got down to her task in good earnest, that there was an almost embarrassing mass of material with which to deal. There was, for example, the case of the mad apothecary named Peatfield who, in 1710

began to set fire to the town on a grand scale.

Committed to the Assizes on a charge of arson, he was found to be suffering from religious mania and not accountable for his actions. So the town built him a two-room asylum all to himself in the middle of their Market Place and kept him there for some 30 years until his death in 1739.



## HOW TO CONTACT OUR OFFICERS

General E-mail: [enquiries@binghamheritage.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@binghamheritage.org.uk)

Name	Office/Projects	Address/Telephone
ALDWORTH Robin	COMMITTEE Newsletter Editor, Photography.	30 Mallow Way. 839991.Fx./Ans.Ph. 839984
ALLEN Peter	CHAIRMAN Coordinator Project 3, Geology	107 Grantham Road. 831575
ALLEN Joyce	COMMITTEE. Membership & Minutes Sec.	107 Grantham Road. 831575
ASHTON Geoff	VICE CHAIRMAN Built Heritage	19 Church Street. 875177
BANNARD John	COMMITTEE Archaeology	17 Market Place. 831286 / Fax: 836083
HENSTOCK Adrian	COMMITTEE History	24 Long Acre 837510
SMITH Hilda	COMMITTEE. Oral Histories	11 Abbey Road. 837781
SNOWDIN Roger	TREASURER	26 Gillotts Close. 839148
STOCKWOOD Tony	COMMITTEE. Town Council Representative	46 Tythby Road. 875778
WILSON Jack	SECRETARY Natural History	3 Quantock Grove. 838275

**Bingham's  
big day out**

**Saturday 18th  
September  
9.30am - 3pm**

**BHTA**  
**Historical  
guided walks**

**FREE!**

Meet us at the Butter Cross