

# **BINGLEY HALL**

**by**

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# **A FARM “CALLED BINGES”, OR, WHY BINGLEY HALL?**

## **AUTHOR’S PREFACE**

It seems incomprehensible that more competent hands than mine have never set down in any detail the fascinating story of the Bingies farm site, nor even that of Birmingham’s once famous Bingley Hall. As an elderly amateur local historian it was with considerable trepidation that I set out to try to fill this gap on my native city’s local history shelves. Unfortunately, physical problems due to advanced years, plus the need to move to Stafford, have retarded research. Consequently it is not unlikely that this preface, and, of course, the story itself – perhaps completed by someone else – will be read posthumously. Therefore, just in case, here are my acknowledgements, all richly deserved.

Without any shadow of doubt, my long-suffering pal, Joe Crumpton, has to top the list. How Joe has managed to keep his patience continually updating my scribblings on his computer, I shall never understand. Then comes dear Molly Jarvis for her constant encouragement and frequent advice on matters of English, helping me over grammatical hurdles that elementary school education of the 1920s ignored. Not only

that, but much of the script was written at her house where she has tolerated with enormous restraint the paper-strewn wasteland otherwise known as her dining table!

Colleague Ivor Davies has spent long hours in Birmingham Central Library on my behalf, searching microfilmed newspapers in Local Studies, a task quite beyond my eyesight. Mention of Local Studies Department, that goldmine of our city's history, brings me to Patrick Baird and his ever-helpful and friendly staff, without whose services there would have been no hope of writing these pages. The staff at Stafford's William Salt Library and Staffordshire Archives too, have been most helpful. Kerry York, Librarian at King Edward's School Foundation offices, has provided invaluable material culled from their archives, without which that section would have been dealt with in a very sketchy way.

Thanks are also due to Graham Acton for generous access to his collection; for photocopies from the Victorian Society; for odds and ends of help from Ned Williams, Mac Joseph, Sue Bates, Mary Bodfish, Gay Hill, Betty Jones, Martin Packer, Chris Upton and many others.

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## **Introduction**

Since 1974, when Bingley Hall on Stafford's popular Weston Road showground opened its doors for the first time, millions of visitors have enjoyed the facilities of this excellent exhibition hall. Of those millions, how many will have given even a passing thought to its name, perhaps wondered, why "Bingley"? And yet, behind that name lies a story that began a very long time ago, not in Stafford at all, but in Birmingham.

Six centuries ago, and possibly more, a medieval farm known as Binges occupied an area on the western outskirts of Birmingham. The town was no Midlands metropolis then, probably having less than 1,500 inhabitants, hardly more than a large village by today's standards. One of the farm's boundaries was a quiet lane, but a lane that was destined, centuries later, to become one of Birmingham's most important and busy thoroughfares, Broad Street. In the following pages the story will be unfolded, as far as surviving evidence permits, of what happened on – and even underneath – that Binges farmland, of people whose lives have been linked with it over the centuries, buildings that have stood there in the past and some of those that do so now. A final chapter will deal with Stafford's link with this interesting and eventful piece of Birmingham history.