

The Art of Photography

Although the basic principle of photography, in the form of the camera obscura, had been understood for centuries, it was not fully developed until circa 1839. Several pioneers in the field contributed to the invention but there were two key figures. First was Louie Daguerre whose daguerreotype produced a single, positive image on a metal plate. This meant the images were impressively clear but could not be reproduced. Second there was William Henry Fox Talbot who created photogenic drawing whereby a negative was produced. This enabled multiple copies to be made resulting in this method being most successful.

The Foundation is fortunate to have a vast collection of photographs within our Art and Archive Collections. This includes images by photographer John Henry Thomas of London, but a regular visitor to Cirencester and the surrounding area.

Another significant collection is that compiled by Thomas Cox, the stepfather of Daniel George Bingham and a solicitor's clerk who was highly active in the community. The photographs, which mostly date from the 1860s, capture people from all different backgrounds. Most of these people and families would not have had the cause or means to have their portraits painted. The photographer of the collection is unidentified and there are several possibilities. However, the most likely person is Cox's close neighbour T.W. Gough (c.1828-1882). Born in Minchinhampton, Gough is recorded in the 1861 census as having a photographic studio in Cirencester's Black Jack Street and later moved it to Silver Street.

The Welsford collection also contains many photographs. Jean Welsford was an important local historian who catalogued the Daniel Bingham Foundation's Archive in the 1980s, when her husband Alan was librarian. Her work ensured the accessibility of the collection today and the photographs are a key source of information about Cirencester and its history. Candid photographs of everyday scenes amount to frozen moments in time. Many photographs depict buildings and people who would otherwise be lost to history. The spontaneity of photographs, especially as the technology advanced, capture scenes that were unlikely to have been drawn or painted.

The Art of Embroidery

The Daniel Bingham Foundation and Cirencester Town Council are indebted to a group of embroiderers from Cirencester and the surrounding area, who produced the most wonderful work of art to celebrate the Millennium. It all started when Janet Langham wrote to the local newspaper suggesting that there be a Cirencester embroidery to commemorate the Millennium.

Angela Flexen, the designer, organiser and embroiderer then showed remarkable skill, industry and dedication in seeing this work of art to completion with the help of a determined team of skilled embroiderers. Mention also has to be made of the framer, Mr L E Slade.

Visitors to the Gallery have the opportunity to see a selection of the embroideries which present the history of Cirencester over the last 2000 years.

Different periods of history and aspects of the town's social life are reflected in the whole series of 12 hexagonal framed and embroidered panels which have been entrusted to the Foundation by the Town Council.



Daniel Bingham
Foundation

To find out more about the Daniel
Bingham Foundation & Gallery visit:
danielbinghamfoundation.org.uk

Charity Name: Bingham Library Trust Limited
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Daniel Bingham
Foundation
GALLERY

Permanent Exhibition

Welcome to the Bingham Gallery, where you can explore the life of our benefactor Daniel George Bingham, the history of Bingham House and experience a glimpse of our collection across different art mediums.

The Bingham Gallery is also host to the Daniel Bingham Foundation Annual Exhibition and pop-up exhibitions throughout the year.

About the Gallery

Daniel Bingham's long-held dream to create a fine art gallery to display the many paintings and drawings that had been presented to the library was finally achieved in 2005 with the opening of the gallery at Bingham House. Over time, the gallery has been shared as a meeting and conference venue as well as hosting civic events on behalf of the Town Council. Every summer, art from the collection would be exhibited alongside archived material focusing on the people and place of Cirencester.

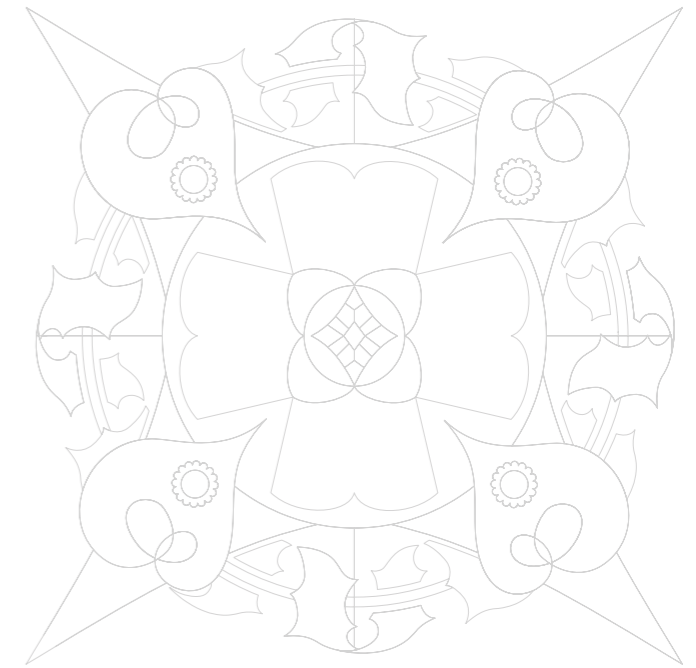
In 2024, with grants from the Kate Winstone Trust and St James's Place a permanent exhibition space was established and opened to the public all year round.

The permanent display includes information about the life of Daniel Bingham and history of Bingham House, as well as showcasing the collection by medium including oils, watercolours, drawings, prints, photographs, and embroideries.

The Annual Exhibition is guest curated and includes artwork kindly on loan with pop up displays throughout the year which display facsimiles and photographs from the collection, as well as being used for events schools/college art, local organisations and guest artists.



Scan to read more
about the artworks
in the collection.



About the Daniel Bingham Foundation

The Daniel Bingham Foundation is the public facing name of the Bingham Library Trust. First established as a Trust for the benefit of Cirencester, to advance public education in the arts and music as well as providing facilities for recreation and leisure, the Foundation seeks to improve life for people who live in and around Cirencester. Our charitable purpose is to support young people and anyone who through age, illness, disability, poverty or social and economic circumstance needs our help.

Vision: To create opportunities for improving the well-being of individuals who live in and around Cirencester and to re-imagine Daniel Bingham's legacy for the benefit of future generations.

Values:

Property Stewardship: using the property endowed and managed by the Trust to enable the delivery of the vision and mission statement.

Partnership Focused: to lead and collaborate with others.

Public Facing: to create a sense of community and opportunity, through volunteering and access to learning, promoting reading and the arts, alongside proactively collecting and looking after local archives.

In rebranding to a Foundation, the Trust commissioned Make It Sticky to help redesign our image and identity, the mosaic art on display is the centrepiece and inspiration for the rebrand – *We are at the heart of Cirencester, where Cirencester's people, history & art come together.*

Who was Daniel George Bingham?

The founder of the building in which you stand was Daniel George Bingham, born on 16th March 1830 in nearby Black Jack Street.

Educated locally he left school in the 1840s and looked for employment. At this time, James Forbes who was lodging with the Bingham family, was the Area Manager of the Great Western Railway. Forbes saw potential in Daniel and gave him his first job as a junior clerk. Forbes and Bingham became lifelong friends and worked together on the railway in London and Holland.

A successful career and shrewd investments meant Bingham was wealthy when he left the railway in 1890, following the Dutch government's decision to nationalise the railway system.

Bingham never lost his appreciation for Cirencester and wanted to help the town and its people. As someone with a passion for books who valued education, a library seemed like the ideal choice for his first project. He purchased the land for the library in 1903 and it was built and opened in September 1905.

Under a separate Trust to that of the Daniel Bingham Foundation, he also funded the building of the Bingham Hall and Rifle Range in King Street which opened in 1908.

A forward-thinking philanthropist, Bingham ensured financial provision for his legacies through careful investment, including various property in the town. On his death in Utrecht in March 1913, the future of the library was secure and has been overseen by Trustees to this day.

Bingham House

Daniel George Bingham's gift to Cirencester was to build a public library, it was an innovative hub of its day. The land was purchased in 1903 and the library was built and opened in September 1905.

Today Bingham House is home to the Daniel Bingham Foundation and the offices of the Bingham Library Trust, a charitable trust and company limited by guarantee.

Bingham House continues to be a community hub with the Local Information Centre being based here, as well as serving as the Head Office of Cirencester Town Council and the Lait Gallery being used by Cirencester Band.

The History of Art in Cirencester

Humans have been creating art since time immemorial. It is believed that the earliest examples of art are petroglyphs, images on stone by means such as carving or scratching. These were created by Neanderthal humans between 290,000 and 700,000 BCE. As early as 45,000 BCE cave paintings started to emerge, often abstract images, handprints as well as depictions of animals.

The earliest art discovered in Cirencester, or in Roman Corinium, was in the form of mosaic pavements. Those discovered in Cirencester are some of the most intricate and well preserved of anywhere in Roman Britain. The most famous mosaic is a 4th century CE depiction of a hare found whilst excavating Beeches Road in 1971. The hare has become the logo of the Corinium museum as well a symbol of Cirencester.

For a time after Roman rule, art in Britain was mainly ecclesiastical, such as wall paintings, illuminated manuscripts and stained glass. As the centuries progressed painting, and largely portraiture, dominated with most art being produced for the aristocratic and the wealthy.

The 18th century brought much more diversity both regarding artists and art. There was an increased interest in landscape and animal paintings and in the painting of key scenes from history.

The Daniel Bingham Foundation's art collection dates from the end of the 18th century to the 21st. Crucially, the Foundation is still collecting art and is glad to receive offers of donations or information about art for sale. Our focus is on the art or artist of Cirencester and the local area.

The Art of Painting

The Foundation's Collection has grown predominantly through donations. The Collection began with five paintings by John Beecham donated by his children in 1912. The Collection continues to grow with one of the oldest paintings only donated in 2017, a 1794 watercolour of the parish church by an unknown artist.

Watercolour was used at least as far back in history as ancient Egypt. However, it was often used in conjunction with other mediums or in the preparatory stages of a painting. The height of its popularity was reached in the 18th and 19th century. In the 18th century, watercolours in the form of dried cakes became available which made it a practical medium to use when travelling and painting from nature.

The development of oil painting is debated, but it was certainly in use by the 14th century. A medium favoured for its variety of colours and textures, different effects could be produced using techniques such as diluting the oil paints and applying glazes. Beecham is the most prominent artist in the Bingham Collection, with 15 paintings, many of which are on permanent display. The majority of these are oil paintings depicting scenes from Cirencester's history.

The 20th century saw the first use of acrylic paint in art. Being a versatile, durable and quickly drying paint ensured its popularity. A further characteristic of acrylic paint is that it can be mixed with other mediums, such as sand to change its texture or water for transparency. One of the Foundation's more recent acquisitions is an acrylic commissioned to commemorate the centenary of Daniel Bingham's death. The piece, 'Cirencester – Capital of the Cotswolds', was painted by local artist Laurie Plant. This kaleidoscopic image depicts iconic Cirencester locations, buildings and trades with an anamorphic portrait of Daniel Bingham in the centre.

The 20th century also saw the introduction of mixed media painting. In the 21st century mixed media techniques are widely used, incorporating an astounding range of mediums from different paints to fabrics, paper and photographs. One of the Collections' iconic mixed media works is Tracey Elphick's Abbey 900, created to celebrate the 900th anniversary of the founding of Cirencester Abbey.

The Art of Drawing

As well as being an important art form, drawing is also a fundamental skill for other art techniques. Paintings, sculptures and even embroideries are often designed to a preliminary drawing or on top of a sketched outline.

Humans have expressed themselves through drawing long before the development of the written word. The mediums with which to draw are vast, from medieval silverpoint to pen and ink, from chalk and pastel to charcoal and graphite. Charcoal is believed to have first been used as a pigment approximately 30,000 years ago. Any plant twigs can be used. By comparison, the graphite pencil has only been in use a few hundred years, following the discovery of a large deposit of graphite in the Lake District in the 16th century.

The ease with which a sketchbook and drawing materials can be carried, provides opportunities to capture spontaneous scenes or events in everyday life, or whilst travelling. By the 18th century there had been considerable improvement in roads and travelling was undertaken for leisure more frequently. Before the invention of the camera, drawing was a way to record and commemorate the sites.

Such drawing was not only for pleasure. There was a growing trend of artists making a living out of recording significant sites for tourist publications. Some travelling artists would also produce illustrations of country houses and estates, either for the owners or for publication. A significant example in our Collection is a print of Johannes Kip's depiction of the Abbey House. Kip, of Dutch birth, drew and engraved many great country houses in Britain. His engraving of the Abbey House was created for Sir Robert Atkyns "The ancient and present state of Gloucestershire."

The recording of architecture and topography in drawings of professional artists and engravers such as Kip, as well as those of amateur artists who drew for their own pleasure, is invaluable. This value is increased when sites either no longer exist or have greatly altered and a comparison can be made. The oldest drawings in our Collection provide insight into Cirencester and its residents from over 200 years ago.