



October 2006

**Tadley and District History Society
(TADS)**

Next meeting - Wednesday 18th October
St. Paul's Church Hall 8.00 to 9.30 pm

**“Researching the History
of Local Villages “**

By Gordon Timmins, independent historian
“Sources of information and interesting snippets”

(Everybody welcome - visitors £2.00)

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www.tadshistory.com

TADS Meeting 15th November

‘The history of England in pub signs’

By Greg Gregory, Andover historian

Last month’s meeting (20/9/06):

‘Felons and Fingerprints’

A talk by Michael Carrigan, ex-Metropolitan Police Forensic Expert

Who dun it?

Whorls, arches, tented arches, radials, dark ridges, white furrows, etc; mercury, carbon, chalk, graphite, aluminium powder, and soft glassfibre brushes etc. All this is part of Forensic Science-speak for interpreting and printing felons’ fingerprints (and in some cases toe or footprints).

Egyptian (and other) mummies have finger prints which have lasted millennia; ancient clay potters left prints; kings have royal seals; embryos have the fingerprints they will one day be born with.

Felon-catcher Mike caused his 60 TADS listeners much mirth as he merrily recounted gruesome happenings in the grimy world of yesteryear and now.

Burglars through the ages have naturally tried to beat the system. In the 1870s the French recorded body measurements and fingerprinted, but didn’t interpret the fingers because they were considered inconsequential.

In 1899 some felonious single ovular twins managed to avoid detection until someone realised their fingerprints would be different. That put paid to their spurious sprees.

A Victorian Indian District Officer, one Edward Henry, having Colonial time on his hands, worked out a filing system for prints and so by 1900 forensic science began taking off. In 1901 Scotland Yard began proper fingerprinting and by 1905 solved their first murder because of prints.

Our near-neighbours, the apes, have jagged and furrowed hands and feet to enable them to tree-swing safely. They could be printed. Mike said academic men (not ladies) sometimes have jagged prints like apes!

In 1928 Chicago gangster, Al Capone, while disagreeing with the Prohibition Laws, obtained the services of a plastic surgeon to smooth his

fingers by skin grafting them from his arm pits. Al was the only print-less person in the world.... Later his plastic surgeon was found with his feet encased in concrete at the bottom of Lake Michigan. Eventually Al's smooth fingers re-grew their prints and he was apprehended in 1933. Mike said he had the fingerprints of a 19 year old man then!

If you're a nervous, sweating felon as felons often are, your hands stand out as sweaty while those hands around you are not. Hence a 4ft 9inch jockey-turned-cat-burglar was sweatingly apprehended by a big Scots policeman one Derby Week. Once the jockey's hands were wiped, he was successfully printed.

In the 1970s an oxy-acetylene cutting bank robber accidentally left behind his complete ring finger, impaled on the spiked wall of the bank. His finger was put in a paste pot for safety and Mike found him, miles away, 3 days later.

What about 'Declan'?

He was a career criminal, keen on London and suburban train travel, always robbing near railway lines. His 45 year life of crime came to a ghastly end when at the age of 63 years and less agile, he horribly misjudged an oncoming train's speed while crossing the railway line near Aylesbury. The finger printers mourned his passing and the news even got to Mike in Swaziland, where he was lecturing at the time.

Many TADS members in our audience empathised with Mike because they had worked in the Forensic Science labs at Aldermaston when they were the best in the world. (Sadly now moved to London).

Thanks, Mike. You brought murder etc. to life for us!

Rosemary Bond

Mr Albert West

At the September meeting Bob Brown, TADS Chairman, said that he wished to make it quite clear that contrary to rumours, TADS had in no way harassed Mr West.

<p>Stop Press - A Magic Lantern Show will be given in Tadley Library on Tuesday 31st October at 7.30pm. Tickets are £4 from the library.</p>

What's On? Local events which may be of interest.

Hampshire Record Office (*Last Thursday' Lectures 1.15-1.45pm*)

26 Oct - James Coventry: gentleman photographer by Gerald Ponting

B'stoke Archaeological & Historical Society (*7.30pm in Church Cottage*)

13th Oct. - The Tichbourne Claimant by Gill Arnott of Hampshire Museums Service

10th Nov - Keeping up with the Atrebrates: populations, identities and social change in the late Iron Age by Richard Massey.

Milestones Museum - "Proud to Serve". An exhibition charting the history of firefighting in Hampshire. Until 30 October.

Friends of the Willis Museum (7.30pm in the Museum)

19 Oct - AGM & Taking the Pulse of Basingstoke - a year later by Barbara Applin .

The Madding Crowd give a Concert in St Paul's Church on Saturday 21st October at 7.30pm. The group researches and performs church and secular music of the English village bands and choirs of the period 1660 to 1861. More details from Bob Brown on 0118 916109.

TADS Outing on Saturday 23rd September.

Leaving misty Tadley we glided southwards in two minibuses to the sunshine of the Weald and Downland Museum at Singleton, West Sussex. 46 threatened buildings, etc have been re-erected for all to enjoy. Of buildings mighty and mean, small Pendean Farmhouse (ex- Midhurst) had an interesting recycling system - a hog-bog under the toilet! The blacksmith making armour was also noteworthy for his enthusiasm and expertise.

The second destination was the Tangmere Military Aviation Museum Trust which dates from an accidental foggy encounter by a pilot onto a flat field in 1916.

Tangmere later became an operational airfield used in WW II by Douglas Bader, the SOE, SIS and many others; and by Squadron Leader Neville Duke in 1953 to fly his Hawker Hunter to a new Airspeed record of 727 mph. Aircraft flew here until 1970. There are several interestingly displayed aircraft including the record breaking Hunter.

Thanks, David Day and Richard Brown for taking us there.

Rosemary Bond

*TADS annual membership is £10 per person.
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