



November 2006

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

Next meeting - Wednesday 15th November

St. Paul's Church Hall 8.00 to 9.30 pm

**“The History of England in
Pub Signs”**

by Greg Gregory, Andover Historian.

“A good excuse for a pub crawl?”

(Everybody welcome - visitors £2.00)

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www.tadshistory.com

TADS Meeting 20th December

“Annual General Meeting of the Society“

Last month’s meeting (18/10/06) *NB. This was a change of programme.*

Commons (especially Berkshire ones)

By Oliver Jenks

Can you ‘own’ a common? Yes.

Do you have the Right to Roam? Not necessarily. May you have access for people, vehicles, easements (water, electricity)? Perhaps. We all assume we can do what we like on the (e.g. Tadley) Common. Not so!

Oliver Jenks explained that since Primeval times, through Roman, Saxon, Tudor, Parliamentary Enclosure times (1750-1850), the Commons Regulatory Act of 1954 and now, the Right to Roam, that you CAN’T necessarily do your own thing on a Common.

You may NOT AUTOMATICALLY graze your beasts; cut timber, heather or birch; remove hoggin (gravel); firewood; turf; litter (bracken for animal bedding); other minerals; take pannage (acorns for pigs); have piscary (fishing) rights; do sport; remove game; ride horses; fly-tip; drive vehicles such as 4 by 4s, Quad bikes and motor bikes; light fires; vandalise, or encroach. Sadly all these things can happen.

Once, the monarch, the barons, the lord of the manor, had something of a stranglehold on who did what and where. Further down the pecking order came the Soc men (freemen or freeholders); the Villeins who owned about 30 acres; the Cottars (5 acres); the slaves or serfs and the squatters and outlaws who had no rights. No progress there, then!

Pressure, pressure, pressure! As the population of this country increased the land became more and more sub-divided on its way down from father to son. Too much may have been taken by too few.

The forests (owned by the monarch); chases (by the lords); warrens (rabbit farms) and commons; were reduced in size. The usual pressures of roads, buildings etc. etc. applied. These encroachments are familiar here on Tadley Common and are still an on-going problem, not automatically solved by an S.S.S.I. order.

Once you were supposed to live in your original dwelling area. If you left and fell on hard times you were returned to your own parish.

Even in a medieval village of strip farming and common fields ('waste') it was all controlled communally. The 'champion' from the French 'champs' = field with its rich soil; to pollarded woods and pastures; to chalky downland; and poor hilly rocky moorland – all shrank. In Wales they practised transhumance: the farmer had an upland summer farm and a valley winter one, a practice until the 18th century. It was all under control....

You couldn't just put any number of beasts on a common. A STINT controlled the number of grazing animals, and EQUIVALENTS meant those you may graze for example; 3 sheep or 1 cow, or 2 cows or 1 horse.

Many people are aware that the number of commons in Britain has declined drastically. We are lucky to have commons over the border in Berkshire: Brimpton; Maidenhead; Snelsmore (trees and ponies); Hungerford's Portdown Common (grazing 200 cattle); and Greenham and Crookham, now mostly restored to heath and grazing after World War II and American military use. Tadley has its very own dry heath, part S.S.S.I. Common (Dexter cattle), as has Silchester.

Who owns these commons? The National Trust, the Councils, the Lords of the Manor and some are owned by the people themselves (as in John O'Gaunt's Hungerford). Tadley's is controlled by the Turbarry Allotment Charity.

How do you manage a common? Laissez-faire or human control? How many actual commoners are there?

Which ever way, ENJOY your common, but keep your ear to the ground, and as they say 'leave only footprints....'

Thank you, Mr Jenks, for your maximum-fact-packed lecture.

Rosemary Bond

NB for more about commons, consult the Manor Court Rolls (literally rolled up); or the Hampshire Record office, Winchester.

P.S. 21-10-06. Some villagers from the North Norfolk village of Hanworth, have this week retrieved their 34 acre common from the feudal clutches of a descendant of William the Conqueror. He appeared in 2004. He must now restore access, grazing, remove fences and pay their £55,000 court costs!

TADS 2007 Calendar showing Local Houses is now on sale for £4.00. Buy yours at the November meeting or from: Adrian Noad, Poulters, Profile Print, Tadley Instruments, Tadley Town Council, Baughurst Post Office, or Brambles Florists.

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

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

30 Nov - Exploring Victorian Cemeteries by Geoff Watts

Milestones Museum - Christmas Gala Evenings on 8 and 15 December
7pm - 10pm. Advanced ticket sales only. Tel: 01256 403900

Willis Museum - Faraway Festival Costumes, 11 Nov. - 23 December.
An exhibition of traditional dress from south west China

Friends of the Willis Museum (*7.30 in the museum*)

16th November - Exploring Victorian Alton by Tony Cross

Silchester Roman Town - Professor Michael Fulford will be giving a talk about the first 10 years of modern excavation on 28th November at 8pm in the Palmer Building, Whiteknights, Reading University. All welcome, free and no ticket required.

Silchester Parish Council have produced a Map, and accompanying leaflet, showing **Silchester Footpaths**. It is available for £3.00 from the Parish Clerk, Cally Morris - Tel: 9701754

History in the making - Nov 2006

Work has started on the conversion of the Fighting Cocks Public House to housing.

Tadley's new cemetery won second place in a national competition.

*TADS annual membership is £10 per person.
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