



June 2007

**Tadley and District History Society
(TADS) - www.tadshistory.com**

**Next meeting - Wednesday 20th June
at St. Paul's Church Hall, 8.00 to 9.30 pm**

**‘The Madding Crowd -
country stories from the
Thomas Hardy era’**

**Mike Bailey, Musical Director of
‘The Madding Crowd’**

(Everybody welcome - visitors £2.00)

Inside this issue:

TADS July meeting
Report of last month's meeting
TADS News
History in the Making
What's On

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www.tadshistory.com

TADS Meeting 18th July 2007:

‘Women in Khaki’

Ian Bailey, Curator of The Adjutant General’s Corps Museum

Last month’s meeting (16/5/07)

The Blue Cross - 100 Years of Animal Care by Craig Burchell, Communications Manager

How about a nice lizard, snake, spider, a couple of opossums, a gecko, goat, sheep or even a ‘furry’? Craig Burchell, animal lover and Blue Cross team guy talked to about 50 TADS’ members about us as a so-called nation of animal likers: Blue Cross for animals and Red Cross for people.

The Blue Cross has existed about 100 years. Born as ‘Our Dumb Friends’ League’ in 1897, out of Londoners’ awareness of the strain put on working horses, the first horse ambulance was acquired and oatmeal and water were readily available. Also supplied were loin cloths (horse blankets) for sweating horses and donkeys plus trace horses to help a straining horse team up a hill. The lizards, geckos etc. and ‘furries’ are 21st century by-products to the Blue Cross work...

Back in 1906 the Victoria Animal Hospital, London, gave free veterinary care to poor people’s horses, then their cats and dogs, etc. In the first 6 months of 1906, 2,344 animals were treated. By 1910, 16 horse ambulances were available.

The Balkan War (1912) unleashed a whole lot of horror for horses, as did W.W.I. Craig showed us horrid images of horses drowning in seas of mud in trench areas. By 1917 there were 870,000 war horses: 226,000 of these were killed and 6,000 Allied horses were helped by the Blue Cross. We Brits were not too keen to accept the horse help, but the French Army did! Eventually we saw sense and even the odd horse-in-need seemed to seek out Blue Cross Aid Posts and stagger there for help...

Post W.W.I the horror didn’t exactly cease. What to do with old war horses? TADS’ Jean Monger said her Grandad, Mr Ernie West of Malthouse Lane, bought an old war horse, Topsy, from Basingstoke Market. They remained completely devoted to each other till Topsy’s demise.

Not only horses were used in wars. Also dogs as messengers, guards, parachute dogs with the SAS (W.W.2) and ammunition carriers etc. HMS Amethyst had rat-catcher Able Sea-cat Simon; carrier pigeons were widely used; plus spy dolphins...

In 1922 The Blue Cross created the FIRST Charity film for cinema release and fund raising. Their 'furry' 'Wilfy' dog starred in the 2006 film.

In the 1930s the non-government funded charity had its work cut out during slum clearances, as many domestic pets would have been boarded-in otherwise and slowly starved to death at the rate of 100-150 animals per day.

The Blue Cross has evolved during the 20th century and into the exotic-animal period of the 21st century. Its name changed also in 1950 from 'Our Dumb Friends League'

Many more veterinary hospitals and mobile clinics have sprung up, principally to help the animals of people in need, especially O.A.P.s. Often the only friend a pensioner has is a loyal, loving pet. If you can't get to the Blue Cross Clinic, a mobile Community Vet can come to you.

In 2006, 95,000 plus free consultations were given, particularly to the 'furries', i.e. dogs, cats, guinea pigs, pet rats and mice, rabbits, etc. Interestingly Craig told us that nowadays abandoned dogs in kennels awaiting re-homing get stressed with the 'will they – won't they adopt me?' attitude of Joe Public, so you view a prospective pet on-screen until you're sure. Then the Blue Cross vets YOU!

All this TLC costs. The average dog to be re-homed over 50 days costs £435, a horse £80 per week, £3 to feed 17 cats per day. The list is endless, and the Blue Cross relies on a vast raft of fund raising. One of their off-shoots is the Brooke Hospital for horses.

In 1943 Maria Dickin, of P.D.S.A .fame, persuaded the military to honour the work of animals in wartime and the Blue Cross assists with suggestions for the Animal V.C. In 2003 a springer spaniel won the Dicken Medal in Iraq, but there have been horses, carrier pigeons and one cat (Sea-cat Simon) also.

So if you've any sort of animal from a spider to a horse to a 'furry,' and you're cash-stressed and need it treated, the Blue Cross is for you.

Thank you, Craig for your seat-edge account of how the British treated --- and treat --- their working and pet animals over 100 years, and how our needs have changed from working animals only, to pets-for-pleasure as well.

Rosemary Bond

TADS News

A small number of TADS members paid a visit to the archives of the Burberry Company in London - more details next month.

Alan Cooke & Lorna Brocks, lately TADS Archivist and Treasurer, recently married at their new home in France - I hope to print a picture of the happy couple next month.

History in the Making

The Treacle Mine public house has been re-named the Tadley Broom Squire in honour of the late Arthur Nash.

What's On? Events which may be of interest.

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

28 June - In Search of Peter Symonds: a tale of two cities by John Hare

Willis Museum exhibitions

5 May to 23 June - **With Scott to the Pole** displays 30 photographs of Scott's ill-fated expedition to Antarctica 1910–1913.

11 to 30 June - **Mystery History**. Hidden treasures from the Willis' Photograph Collection. Help us identify people, places and events!

Milestones Museum

23 & 24 June, 10am – 5pm **Festival of Fire Fighting** - An outdoor show for all the family. With displays and demonstrations. £1 admission to show field, includes '2 for 1' voucher to museum.

16 June - 2 September - Saved for the Nation: **The History of the FA Cup**.

N.B. TADS still requires a new Programme Organiser.

*TADS annual membership is £10 per person.
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