



October 2007

**Tadley and District History Society  
(TADS) - [www.tadshistory.com](http://www.tadshistory.com)**

**Next meeting - Wednesday 17th October  
at St. Paul's Church Hall, 8.00 to 9.30 pm**

## **'A Barrel Organ Bonanza'**

**By Richard Kerridge & Keith Hilson,  
Collectors.**

*(Everybody welcome - visitors £2.00)*

Inside this issue:

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

*Comments, queries and suggestions to Bob Brown, Tadley (0118) 981 6109,  
or Richard Brown (0118) 9700100, e-mail: [richard@ilexind.plus.com](mailto:richard@ilexind.plus.com)*

**[www.tadshistory.com](http://www.tadshistory.com)**

**TADS Meeting 21st November 2007:  
'The Watercress Line - the Mid-Hants Railway'**

Dave Yaldren, Talks Organiser

**Last month's meeting (19/9/07)**

**The Whitchurch Silk Mill**

by Geoff. Hide, Guide and family descendant

Silk, satin, cotton, rags... almost everyone would prefer the romance of silk and the expense, warmth (or coolness) and luxury going with it.

Geoff. Hide said that there were 24 silk mills on the River Test. Now the only one is at Hampshire's Whitchurch - and a very beautiful building it is, and still working.

The Hides owned the Silk Mill from 1886 until 1955. Coming originally from Sussex they took up SHOPPING, becoming so successful at providing the clothing of the Irish navvies building the Didcot to Southampton railway, they bought the mill at Whitchurch. Geoff's Great, Great, Uncle James ran the mill, harnessing the Test's water power so successfully that the resultant silk was good quality and not lumpy or uneven.

Mills are dangerous places, and you had to avoid entanglement with 3 floors' worth of belts and pulleys, looms, hanks, bobbins and flying shuttles which could hole a wall, or even end up out of the window and in the River Test!

Geoff mentioned the Moss family. Rita worked in the mill as a silk weaver from the age of 14 years till well into her eighties and only died this year.

Ted Moss is now 92 years old.

Looms need split-second fine tuning which they obviously got at Whitchurch. They need ladies like Joan, who will spend 3 weeks threading up 10,000 threads, or designers like Clare, who design everything from clothes for the film 'Titanic', down to silk ties, silk ribbons (and 170 metres of these were for the Australian Mebourne's Nutcracker ballet!), curtains, banners, dresses, upholstery, silk pictures (on a Jacquard loom), and stuff for the Harry Potter films.

Wedding dresses are a no-no, because brides figured out that the late Princess Diana's dress crushed too easily.

Once the Hides worked with the Basingstoke Burberry family.

Silk can sell at anything from £80 to £160 per metre, depending on whether it's organza, spun silk, taffeta, raw silk, Ottoman silk for QCs etc.etc., or even WW2 silk insulation for copper cables.

Geoff showed us silk worm cocoons which unravel to produce one and a half, to two miles of silk, bobbins, silk samples and swatches of silk, silk, silk.

Aren't we just glad the Chinese gave silk to the World 3-4,000 years ago, but keeping many of it's secrets to themselves for much of that time.

Long live Geoff Hide and the Silk Route!

Thank you Geoff, from us all.

Rosemary Bond

---

## TADS News

We still desperately need a **Programme Organiser** - see last newsletter for details of duties. Without a programme of talks TADS as we know it will not exist. Will some one please volunteer?

---

## History in the Making

Pamber Heath, 22-24 Sept 2007.  
The village was without mains water for 3 days due to suspected contamination of the supply. This resulted in water bowsers in the streets and the Pelican Inn supplying bottled water!



*Whitchurch Silk Mill*

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

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

25th October -Film presentation: **Raising the Mary Rose, 25 years on.**

Tuesday 30 Oct 2007 at 7:30pm **The Tudor warship Mary Rose**

- discovery, excavation and preservation' a lecture by Dr Ken Collins. Price £4. Bookings on 01962846154

To 27th October - **Literary Hampshire** - An exhibition exploring some of Hampshire's literary links using items from the Record Office.

**B'stoke Archaeological & Historical Soc.** (7.30 in Church Cottage)

8th November - **The First farmers**; How did the Neolithic reach Britain? By David Miles of English Heritage.

### **Willis Museum exhibitions**

Until 24 Dec 2007 - **The Curious Case of the Tichborne Claimant.**

### **Friends of the Willis Museum**

18th October - AGM and **the Millenim Bells** by Hector Goldsack

15th November - **Tales of a Working Wind mill** by Gavin Bowe

### **Milestones Museum**

Wednesday 24 October, 10am to 5pm - **The Theatre of Making - Fired Up Materials transformed by fire.** Take part in a dramatic day of glass-blowing, sizzling ceramics and molten metal by leading British artists. With music, storytelling, a lantern procession and an open-air grand finale, Fired Up is the ideal event for a family half-term day out.

*TADS annual membership is £10 per person.  
Correspondence to Tadley and District History Society,  
PO Box 7264, Tadley. RG26 3FA*