



December 2007

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

**Next meeting - Wednesday 19th December  
at St. Paul's Church Hall, 8.00 to 9.30 pm.**

## **‘TADS Annual General Meeting and Social’**

*(Drinks provided, but please bring a food  
contribution.)*

 The Committee would like to wish  
everybody a Merry Christmas and a  
Happy New Year.

**Membership subscriptions** - The subscription will remain at £10 per person for the coming year. Please put your subscription (cheque or cash) in a sealed envelope with your name and address and the amount written on the outside and hand it to the Treasurer. (A secondhand envelope will save writing the address).

*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 16th January 2008:**

**‘Frank Hornby’**

*(The man who made Meccano, trains, and Dinky Toys)*

**by John Hollands**

**Last month’s meeting (21/11/07)**

**The Watercress Line – The Mid Hants Railway**

**By Dave Yaldren, Volunteer Talks Organiser**

Romance. Pride no prejudice. She must be fastidiously groomed like a beautiful lady. If she stops polish her. Or oil her. If she passes you by, wave enthusiastically. The mighty locomotive must roll in an immaculate way.

Judging by the 50+ TADS’ members’ adoring eyes and nostalgia for a yesteryear where Dr. Beeching had NOT axed these beautiful but mighty beasts. The steam loco has a continuing place in many hearts and on many railway lines.

‘Going over the Alps’. Who would believe that part of the 10mile railway line from Alton to Alresford is an alp-like 652 feet above sea level (Medstead and Four Marks Station). Any train driver or fireman (or lady) must ensure adequate coal and loads of water for steam so that locos like ‘Bittern’ or ‘Bodmin’ or ‘318016’ can let their wagons roll. They roll through the haze of smoke and steam like billowing white cow parsley flowers adorning an iron road lined with grassy banks, trees and undulating chalky fields. There is access to the main-line at Alton.

Dave said the watercress Line website - [www.watercressline.co.uk](http://www.watercressline.co.uk) has 6.25 million hits per month. That’s going some! People come from far and wide; Tadley to Tokyo (one Japanese family spent 5 days there and only 1 day in London), Newmarket to New York (a chauffeur-driven American Grandma brought her grandson in the Rolls, to experience steam). It’s a treat. A ‘must-have’ ride. You can indulge a loved-one to have a go at DRIVING a locomotive and be persuaded to part with about £200 for that privilege. If not there are Festivals, Wizard Weeks, Santa Specials (19,500 visits in 9 days in 2006) Thomas the Tank Engine Days, Galas and ‘Goings-on’ galore, including a R.A.T. (Real Ale Train) and

luxury dining on The Watercress Belle, waited on by our worthy Dave dressed in white!

As its name suggests, the Watercress Line was built in 1865 to transport watercress from Hampshire's chalk streams to London's markets, within 2 hours of picking. Watercress now goes by road!

When Beeching axed the line along with countless others (1960s) it lay rusting, rotting and nearly got blitzed (1973). Then a group of enthusiasts began to restore it, and recovered sad cogs, nuts, bolts, boilers, engines, wheels, etc. from a Barry Island (Wales) scrap yard resembling a dinosaurs' graveyard.

It can take 5 to 7 years and tons of T.L.C. to resurrect a locomotive. It costs a lot too: £2000 to buy a rusty loco and £2000 to transport it by road to Ropley Engine Sheds just to make a start. When completed it has a 10 year 'M.O.T.'. Don't forget the carriages... Spare parts are now made at Ropley. Steam Coal comes down by road from Scotland.

It needs 55 volunteers on any one day to run the steam railway. In 2007 there were 30 PAID staff but countless hundreds of volunteers to garden, paint, restore, advise, drive, shunt, walk the line, run cafés, & check first aid boxes and fire extinguishers. Signalling is done by professionals.

Dave's 27 years' 'watercress' work shone from his happy face. He must have locos in his blood and their steam in his system! What a good advert for retiring & remaining disgracefully young, while giving and getting enjoyment.

Thank you, Dave. You may now have even more Tadley enthusiasts wending their way to The Watercress Line.

Rosemary Bond

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## **TADS News**

David Day is organising a trip to the Tutankhamun exhibition in February. Cost will be about £32 per person. If you expressed an interest at the last meeting David will be contacting you. If not and you want to go please ring David on 0118 9700909.

## **History in the making**

We learned with regret of the death of Dr Michael Speight on 4th December. Dr Speight was a GP at the Morland Surgery for many years.

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

**Hampshire Record Office** (*Thursday lunchtime events 1.15-1.45pm*)

10 Jan. These Hallowed stones.

17 Jan. The Hampshire Labourer

*NB - Due to building work this programme may be disrupted. Before travelling to Winchester check on tel. no. 01962846154.*

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

10 Jan 'A medieval household; Simon & Eleanor de Montfort at **Odiham Castle**' by David Miles of English Heritage

**Friends of the Willis Museum**

Jan 17 "The history of **Thornycrofts**", by Chris Tree

**Willis Museum exhibitions**

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

**Milestones Museum**

Many Family type events before Christmas.

1 Dec to 1 Jan **Shell Wildlife Photographer of the Year** Exhibition 2006

From vivid, colourful landscapes to intimate portraits of animal behaviour, this exhibition offers an extraordinary insight into the beauty, drama and diversity of the natural world. On loan from the Natural History Museum.

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**Library Books** - 2 books which may be of interest that are available from Tadley Library:

'My Father before me' by Norman Goodland, which describes life around Baughurst some years ago. The place names are coded.

'It happened in Hampshire' - doings, sayings, and things of interest past & present, collected by Hampshire Women's Institute

*TADS annual membership is £10 per person.  
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