

April 2008



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

**Next meeting - Wednesday 16th April
at St. Paul's Church Hall, 8.00 to 9.30 pm**

***The creation of "Memories" a book
about life in Aldermaston village
from the 1950s to the present day***

by the editor

Sally-Anne Martin

(Everybody welcome - visitors £2.00)

Book Launch - *The Mayor will launch our new version of Florence Davidson's 1913 'History of Tadley' at 2.30pm on Saturday 3rd of May at the Immanuel Centre (adjacent to the United Reformed Church on Main Road). Members are invited to attend, but please arrive by 2.15pm. Copies of the book will be on sale at £6.00 each. TADS members may collect their free copy during the afternoon..*

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

www.tadshistory.com

TADS Meeting 21st May 2008:
An attractive impediment
(The life of Patrick Campbell)
By Nick Thomas

Last month's meeting (19/3/08)

Death and Disease in Medieval London
By John Lloyd

Boils, brucellosis, tumours, sweat, vomit, diarrhoea, abominable stench, fumes, filth, tapeworms, amoebic dysentery, bore worms, fleas, flies, whipworms, rats, corpses of man and beast, dung, 2 donkey-width narrow streets, smallpox, VD, typhoid, bread ergotism (St Anthony's Fire disease from fungus on wheat), violence, accidents, childbirth, stillbirth, TB, bubonic and pneumonic plagues, septicaemia, etc. etc. ah, the joys of a vile medieval London!

Edward III (1312 – 77) agreed his capital was vile but didn't realise the dire smells were connected to disease.

14th Century London was largely confined within the walls of the Roman city: 448 acres heaving with 80,000 souls. Whole streets were confined to one trade or craft: their names but not the same smells, survive today. For example, leather boiling tanneries, wool and sheepskin processing caused 'a most disgusting stench.'

Apparently we share 65 diseases with dogs alone. Living cheek by jowl with the melting-pot of horrors above, saw an average life span of 35 years. You married (or not) at 15 but probably didn't live to see your grandchildren.

The 'rakers' (street cleaners) of the day raked street crossings in a vain attempt to cleanse smelly old London. They dodged effluent jettisoned from jettied house windows and streets swimming in every imaginable form of filth. The River Thames was London's lifeblood but also its open wound.

Physicians' hands were pretty much tied (and dirty!) by lack of knowledge and facilities, John said. The fact that families shared a bed, the floor or straw, and behaved in an uninhibited way, socially different from us, didn't help.

The various plagues and Black Death (1349) killed 40,000 Londoners (half the City's population). The brimming cemeteries and cataclysmic strife were partly caused by ships' Black Rat fleas and bodies were thrown into communal pits and covered with lime. One such pit was Houndsditch, a massive area just outside the City walls. Bun Hill (formerly 'Bone' Hill) was literally made of charnel house bones.

It is said you could avoid the plague by smoking, getting syphilis, or being in very close proximity of a HORSE, as Black Rat fleas can't abide horsey smells. Allegedly one Samuel Pepys, diarist of another era, avoided catching the great Plague because he smelled of horses, despite mixing VERY closely with lots of people.....

Another horror of medieval London was the treatment of vagabonds, thieves, those causing an affray ('Fray'), petty criminals and felons. These poor souls were often tortured for minor offences: hanged, drawn and quartered; or burned at the stake; or boiled alive; or 'pressed' to death; or put in the stocks. Sometimes stocks' occupants were killed by exposure to the elements, asphyxiation or neglect. Their ears might be nailed to the pillory, etc. They were taunted by Londoners who just loved a good old public hanging etc. (often hangings were in batches of 24!)

So those were the medieval days. John said people did not CARE then.
Do we care today?

Thank you John, for your forcibly-put tales of pathos, death and disease in medieval London, meted out to 62 awestruck TADS' members.

Rosemary Bond

Burberry's Archivist

We were sorry to learn that David Quelch, a Director of Burberry's of London, had recently died. As reported in the July 2007 TADS Newsletter, David showed a party from TADS round the Burberry archives and collections in central London last May. He was particularly interested in the information we had concerning Major Roller of Tadley, who was a close friend of Thomas Burberry and one of the firm's two illustrators.

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

Alfred the Great, Warfare, Wealth & Wisdom - a major exhibition at the Winchester Discovery Centre, Jewry Street. Until 27th April. For timed tickets Tel. 01962 840440 (*I have been told this is well worth seeing - ed*)

Hampshire Record Office

Exhibition - **Quills to keyboards:** the changing face of record keeping from Alfred the Great to the present day.

The Record Office are now holding lunchtime lectures every Thursday from 1.15-1.45pm. For Information see www3.hants.gov.uk/whatson-hro or ring 01962846154.

Willis Museum exhibitions

Tooth & Claw A photographic exhibition focusing on Britain's predators at the Willis Museum

Milestones Museum

Until 20th April - **Eating Creepy Crawlies.** A special exhibition.
Sat 26 & Sun 27 April, 10am to 5pm **Model Engineering Show**

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

8th May **Berkshire Iron Age Hill forts; their construction and use** by Andrew Hutt of Berkshire Archaeological Trust

Friends of the Willis Museum

19th April - **Its a Monk's Life** by Brother John Hodges

15th May - Upstairs, downstairs at **Hackwood Park** by Brian Spicer

Public Rights of Way Map - Unfortunately the website reference for this new and very useful map went missing from the printed copies of the March Newsletter. (*Computer software strikes again!*) It is:

<http://whereilive.hants.gov.uk/rightsofway/webform1.aspx>

*TADS annual membership is £10 per person.
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