

September 2008



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

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

***Experiences in World War II***

*by*

***Alan Freeman***

*(A Captain, Royal Engineers in the  
Second World War)*

*(Everybody welcome - visitors £2.00)*

**Help wanted** - Ron Needham has decided it is time to give up the Newsletter Distributor job after many years. Many thanks Ron for all your work. We need someone to take on the job (it could even be split) and should only take a couple of hours a month. Details from Richard (below).

**Fighting Cocks Development** - All concerned have now agreed that it will be called 'Fighting Cocks Place'.

*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)*

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## **TADS Meeting 15th October 2008:**

### **Sixty years at Northington Farm**

By James Crosby-Dawson

**Last month's meeting (16/7/08)**

### **Ufton Court - a House of Secrets**

**by Jane Burrell,**

**Former curator of West Berkshire Museum, Newbury**

What a waste to have an ancient pile with creaking timbers; some wattle and daub and decorative plaster; beautiful rooms with panelling and carving; a history of some calm, some intrigue and mayhem; passages and underground tunnels; priest holes: BUT NO GHOSTS!

Grade I listed Ufton Court House is secreted in the Berkshire countryside, cocooned elegantly between Padworth, the Kennet and Avon Canal, Englefield and Burghfield, and roughly 4 miles N.E. of Tadley.

About 55 TADS members heard Jane's spiritedly-paced descriptions of how the house was built over a 600 year period. NOT entirely Elizabethan as some think, but up to 17th & 18th centuries. Begun in medieval times with a wooden cruck development, it included a 2-storey Great Hall with smoke holes (now sympathetically glazed), a buttery and pantries with ancient doors. It was owned by the Lovell family. During the Wars of the Roses they were Yorkists. Wrong horse! Lovell disappeared: he may have drowned crossing a river while kitted-out in heavy armour. He was never found. Still no ghost!

In Tudor times, a lady named Elizabeth married into the wealthy Perkins family. When Richard Perkins died in 1560, Elizabeth re-married even better – into the Marvyn family. Sadly childless she 'adopted' some nephews. Somewhere along the way Elizabeth became lost in the woods round Ufton Court. The locals helped her find her way home and she willed them (1581) the famous Ufton Bread Dole which was, and is, distributed every year from a certain Long Gallery window. (Nowadays the Benyon family hands out the bread).

Lady Elizabeth Marvyn had been into really imposing home improvements, and from being a minor manor, Ufton was a wonderful dwelling by now. She had made the Solar, a bed chamber, private and cosy and well away from the Great Hall's openness.

The house has a beautiful porch with interesting wooden carvings, although done with crude tools whose chisel marks still show. The doors were widened so the ladies' gorgeous wide dresses etc. could pass through!

Sir Francis Walsingham, (1532–1590) was Queen Elizabeth's spy-master. He 'worked from home but networked big-time with spies everywhere', Jane said, and took over the skulduggery side of things to protect the Queen from the Roman Catholic, Mary Queen of Scots. Walsingham was local because he bought the Englefield Estate near to Ufton. Luckily the (Catholic) Perkins family at Ufton Court was somehow safe!

Eventually the 16<sup>th</sup> century panelling was covered with 18<sup>th</sup> century panelling and as Ufton Court was a Roman Catholic stronghold the 'M: R' ('Mary Regina') suited the occupants' religious beliefs. Cardinal Pole was the last Roman Catholic Cardinal at this time in England, and he was a family friend at Ufton. All this became difficult when Henry 8<sup>th</sup> renounced Catholicism and priest hunts were carried out. Hence Ufton Court's maze of tunnels and probably 4 priest holes for secreting practising priests. The place was raided at least twice by officials searching for priests: Sir Francis Knollys and his staunch band of Protestants found some of their hiding places but never any priests. However they took away a small fortune in gold plate intended for priests' upkeep: £751 worth in 1599. 2008 value: £250,000. This left the Marvyn family financially straitened.

Ufton Court's Library dates from 1583 – but few books are there now. Lady Elizabeth Marvyn built one of the earliest English Long Galleries for recreation on wet days. Ladies walked up and down thus preserving their exquisite dresses. Children played restrained games there! There's a tithe barn; also kitchen and formal gardens and carp ponds for fish-farming, (now weedy and overgrown). Rosary and cockle shell motifs showed this was a Roman Catholic residence. The Green Room was a private dining room, finely plastered and secreting a priest hole buttressed from the outside.

IF funding were available to discover the secrets of this House of Secrets, would we want to know?

Thank you, Jane, for your fascinating talk.

Rosemary Bond

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

### Hampshire Record Office

#### On-Going Exhibitions at the HRO

Digging through the Archives: A botanical journey round the county

Access Hampshire Heritage exhibition: How to make a start on local history research

*The Record Office are now holding lunchtime lectures every Thursday from 1.15-1.45pm and many other events.*

*For Information see [www3.hants.gov.uk/whatson-hro](http://www3.hants.gov.uk/whatson-hro) or ring 01962846154.*

### Milestones Museum

18 Sept. 7.30pm **Evacuees at the Vyne** by Nigel Beazley. An illustrated talk from the Friends of the Willis Museum. Visitors £2.00.

The Museum is featuring their 1940s Sweet shop at the weekends.

**Willis Museum - *The Museum will be closed from 29 Sept to the beginning of December for a £560,000 revamp.***

**B'stoke Arch' & History Soc.** (19:30 at Church Cottage, Church Square,)

9th October - **Watermills on the River Loddon** by Brian Eighteen

**OPEN House London** is on 20-21 Sept. See [openhouse.org.uk](http://openhouse.org.uk)

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## History in the making

Tadley, August 2008. Death of Dr Peter Brough who was a GP and Senior Partner at the Holmwood Health Centre. Dr Brough was instrumental in the setting up of St Michael's Hospice in Basingstoke. He was also a fine botanist who had written two books about wildflowers and was heavily involved in conservation work in Pamber Forest.

On Sunday 7th September 2008 there was a Welcome Service at Douai Abbey, Woollhampton, for the Revd Tim Moore to the Reading & Silchester Methodist Circuit. He will be living in Thatcham with his wife Amy.

*TADS annual membership is £10 per person.  
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