



May 2009

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

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

**The Story of the Royal Berks
Medical Museum
By Surgeon David Goodwin (retired)**

(Everybody welcome - visitors £2.00)

TADS Committee

Bob Brown, the Chairman, and Jim Coles, the Treasurer, have announced that they will be standing down from the Committee by the next AGM. Together with the existing vacancy for a Visit Organiser this will potentially leave a considerable hole in the Committee. If you are interested in joining the Committee in any role please make yourself known to Bob, as the future of TADS depends on members being willing to run the Society.

*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 17th June 2009:
Visit to the Museum of English Rural Life,
At Reading University.**

April meeting report(15/4/09)

**The History of Aviation in Berkshire
by Ken (curator) and Jean (archivist) Fostekew,
Woodley Museum of Berkshire Aviation**

From wood to supersonic. Planes, that is. In less than 100 years, Jean and Ken reminded us, planes have progressed from the flimsy, papery, wooden structures of yesteryear, to supersonic giants. The number of airfields in Berkshire (as in many counties) has decreased from a patchwork quilt of them between 1913 to their heyday in the 1940s, down to the odd airstrip in the late 20th century.

However, the romance of flight lives on and Woodley's Museum has a body of dedicated volunteers who love, pamper, restore, admire and preserve all-that-flew.....or as many as their finances and energy permit. And they probably have aviation fuel in their veins instead of blood!

In 1913 a French Bleriot plane flown by André Selmet, landed on the flat part of a 100 acre field in Woodley: that field became Woodley Aerodrome. Also in 1913, a fascinated 11year old girl had a plane ride there; in 1973 that same girl flew in Concorde, and at the age of 91 she visited Woodley Museum where that field had been. In just her lifetime, aeroplane pilots went from pioneering flights of uncertainty and possible death, to supersonic sophistication and a better safety record.

Many of the 50+ TADS members were probably surprised to find Calcot Park once had an airfield. And Swallowfield. We all knew the massive and high plateau Greenham Common Airbase and on our border, Aldermaston wartime airfield of glider, etc. fame. Even Vincent's Garage basement in Reading secretly manufactured aircraft. So, not all the 'eggs' were in one basket, but spread around.

If you visit Woodley Museum, you can see the Miles Martinet and Miles Student planes under restoration. Fred 'FG' Miles was a colourful aviator who married an even more flamboyant and colourful aircraft designer-pilot, Maxine, known as Blossom. 'FG' built his first Hawk plane at Woodley, selling at £395 circa 1929. As it was so popular, he upped the price to £400 and also decided to have his aircraft production company at Woodley. In the 1920s one chap who had connections with Fred 'FG' Miles, built his own plane in his Dad's laundry!

Woodley was a magnet for many famous aviators: Charles Lindberg visited and thought our aircraft inferior and said we'd never win a war. But he was a Nazi sympathiser and adviser. Douglas Bader lost his legs at Woodley.

Photo reconnaissance was very important in early flying because planes were not robust enough for fighting. Spitfires painted pink were manufactured at Wargrave – dawn camouflage!

Miles and Handley Page aircraft were built at Woodley. Large exhibits include a Fairey Gyrodyne from White Waltham, and the wind tunnel model for what could have been the first ever supersonic aircraft.

The last plane flew out of Woodley in 1963. Now, houses carpet the area.

Ken and Jean's enthusiasm is undimmed and we thank them for their revelatory aviation history talk.

Rosemary Bond

Website: www.MuseumofBerkshireAviation.co.uk

TADS outing to Southwark, London - Sunday 31st May.

Sally Botwright who gave February's talk on Southwark is taking TADS Members on a 2 hour conducted walk around Southwark.

Meet Sally at 2.30pm at the southern end of London Bridge (not Tower Bridge) on the eastern side by the Dragon Statue. Cost of walk is £8.00.

Please make your own way to London.

Non -TADS are welcome to join the walk, but please let David (01189 7009090 or Carol (0118 9701578) know you are coming.

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

Hampshire Record Office

There is a Family History for Beginners event every Wednesday. The Record Office holds lunchtime lectures every Thursday from 1.15-1.45pm

For Information see www3.hants.gov.uk/whatson-hro or ring 01962846154.

The current free exhibition is about the history of Royal Clarence Yard, the Royal Navy's victualling yard in Gosport.

Milestones Museum always has special exhibitions and events as well as being a fascinating look into past life and industry in the county.

Willis Museum - *The Museum has re-opened and I am told the new Sainsbury Gallery is well worth visiting and it will have regular special exhibitions.*

Friends of the Willis Museum (7.30pm at the museum)

May 21 'A history of Punch and Judy' by Alix Booth (NB the same speaker is coming to TADS in November).

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

11th June - AGM followed by members contributions

An archive of Tadley Photographs on the internet

Dave Bowman, of a longstanding Tadley family, has started an on-line archive of photographs of Tadley. It has been agreed that the photographs will be accessible through the TADS Website.

The initial contents will be photos from our book 'Around Tadley - People and Places' as well as photos of children born 1954/5 at Tadley Primary School, including Dave himself.

More photos are needed. If you have any you think may be of interest, please contact Dave on 0118 9816376 or email dbowman@btinternet.com

*TADS annual membership is £10 per person.
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