



June 2009

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

Next meeting - Wednesday 17th June

**A visit to the
Museum of English Rural Life
in Reading**

7.30 for 8.00pm.

The museum is in: Redlands Road, Reading. RG1 5EX
*(Directions how to get there are given on the back page
of this Newsletter)*

Dr Roy Brigden, the curator, will give a short talk
about the museum at 8pm. You will then be able
to explore it until about 9.30pm.

(Everybody welcome - visitors £2.00)

*Comments, queries and suggestions to Bob Brown, Tadley (0118) 981 6109,
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www.tadshistory.com

**TADS Meeting 15th July 2009:
'Parish Life in late medieval Reading'
By Joan Dils**

May meeting report(20/5/09)

The Royal Berks Medical Museum

by David Goodwin, Surgeon (Retired)

The museum was founded 10 years ago by David together with 2 other enthusiasts, and a historian. David, as a surgeon of long standing, had realised how fast medical science and procedures had advanced and changed during his own career and that even recent history might be lost. They started collecting redundant things from the hospital and other sources. The collection was greatly enhanced as a result of a series of hospital closures in South Oxfordshire. Fortunately the hospital authorities were very supportive and allowed them to use half the original Royal Berks hospital laundry to store the ever-growing pile of bits and pieces.

The museum first opened to the public in 2001 then later closed for a year while they spent £40,000 of lottery money on re-developing the displays. It reopened in June 2008 and is now open on Sunday afternoons.

David gave a brief summary of the history of the Royal Berks, which opened in 1839 at a cost of £6,900 and was well over budget – nothing changes! The wings were added to the building in 1880 and the laundry is of the same date.

Invasive surgery started in 1809 and itinerant surgeons were rarely qualified before the 1850s, so survival odds were not good. But surgeons, or barber surgeons as they were known, had been hacking lumps off of people for many, many years and the museum has some forceps from the mid 18th century and later amputation instruments.

So what else does the museum contain? David showed us photographs of some of the artefacts and displays, which range up to modern times.

The artefacts include: an original Lister spray for spraying carbolic acid as an antiseptic; a home pharmaceutical box; an early pill-making machine; an 1847 anaesthetic ether spray; a Victorian bandage winder (re-use of bandages is not allowed today, even if they are sterilised); official hospital mugs for the quart of ale given after an operation and everyday while in hospital, (presumably because beer was safer than water); some prototype equipment of the 1970s made by our own AWRE; a case of glass eyes; a page from the Lancet in 1927 recommending 'low nicotine' cigarettes! My favourite was a beautiful set of Trepine tools of about 1800 for cutting holes in a skull, so much more elegant than the DeWalt cordless electric drill recently used in Australia in an emergency.

The displays include: an early pharmacy shop; a 1950s dental suite; Wartime medicine; a 1950s ward; and much more. In an echo of the previous TADS talk about 'Aviation in Berkshire' they even have a copy of the admission record for Douglas Bader after the flying accident at Woodley in 1931 when he lost both his legs.

David finished by playing sound recordings of Florence Nightingale, her housekeeper talking about her, and the last living bugler from the 1854 Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava sounding the charge on his original bugle. It brought history a bit closer.

Thank you Surgeon David for a very interesting talk about your museum, which from the photographs appears to be packed to the rafters and would be a fascinating place to spend a Sunday afternoon. If any of the exhibits make you feel faint at least you can be assured of professional attention on the spot.

Richard Brown

Website: www.bmhc.org

TADS outing to Southwark, London

8 people met Sally Botwright on a beautiful afternoon for a very enlightening 2 hour wander round the nooks and crannies of Southwark. Sally explained the area's history and showed us many interesting buildings and sites. It was well worth going.

Richard

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

Hampshire Record Office

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

Milestones Museum has an exhibition to commemorate the centenary of the Red Cross In Hampshire.

Willis Museum - There is an exhibition of Hampshire's Treasures, in the new Sainsbury Gallery.

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

18th June - 'More gems from the archives' by John Hollands. A further selection of items from the Willis Museum's own archives collection

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

11th June - AGM followed by members contributions

Silchester Roman Town Excavations - BAHS have arranged their annual visit to the excavations on Thursday, 30 July, commencing at 6.30pm at the dig site. TADS members are welcome to join them.

Tadley Community Plan -The Town council are holding a workshop on Monday 22nd June to launch the Plan. Residents and local organisations are invited.

Directions to the Museum of English Rural Life, Reading.

From M4 Junction 11 take the B3270 signed University. Continue on this road until you reach the large roundabout.

Then take the first exit, A327 Shinfield Road, towards the University and Reading town centre. Continue on this road, going over two mini roundabouts and one set of traffic lights, and pass the University of Reading, Whiteknights Campus on your right.

After the Whiteknights Campus, take the right turn lane at the next traffic lights. Turn right and immediately left into Redlands Rd (signed for Royal Berks Hospital and Museum of English Rural Life). Continue down Redlands Road, until near the bottom. The Museum is on the left, opposite the Hospital.

*TADS annual membership is £10 per person.
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