



November 2009

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

**Next meeting - Wednesday 18th November
at St. Paul's Church Hall, 8.00 to 9.30 pm**

A HISTORY OF PUNCH & JUDY

*Told by the puppets with assistance from
Alix Booth*

(Everybody welcome - visitors £2.00)

TADS Committee - We have had two volunteers to join the Committee in the last month for which we are very thankful. We still need another one at least, as Derek Heath the Programme Organiser will also be standing down. Derek has nearly finished organising next year's talks programme (the 3rd he has done) so his successor will have a while to get settled in.

*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 16th December 2009: Annual General Meeting and Social

October meeting report (21/10/09)

The History of Policing in the Thames Valley

by Ken Wells, Curator of Thames Valley Police Museum, Sulhamstead

Mr Plod the policeman he was not. Amid scenes of screaming hilarity from some of the TADS audience, Ken drily recounted tales from his Police career: how his police horse was tied to a London bus pole and towed away (accidentally and unharmed) in the Ealing Broadway area; how his duties took him into London's red light district; and an unexpected carriage ride in Windsor Park with the late Queen Mother. He had been called to view a suspicious (or not) footprint near her window when he was a Scene of Crime Officer.

Ken has 47 years' service under his belt, 30 as a Police Officer and the rest as a Scene of Crime officer and then Museum Curator at Sulhamstead.

Being too short at 5'9" to join a rural force, he opted for the London Met.

The Mounted Police Section made him feel taller, and took the weight off his plodding feet ... Being a Village Beat officer didn't really suit either, so Ken specialised in CSI, helping to solve the myriad murders which occur these days (Sept-Dec.1999, 9 murders).

Ken outlined policing through the ages: the Norman Shire Reeve (Sheriff); then the village constable (1215), when a man policed his area for one year. In Charles II's reign there were Watchmen, known as 'Charlies'. They were often old and carried a lamp and a stick. The Bow Street Runners were a non-uniformed group of men, badly paid, but with possible rewards. They carried a 6-inch long hollow tipstaff with a paper warrant hidden inside, as a badge of authority. Ken is the proud owner of a genuine tipstaff, donated locally... 'Robin Redbreasts' were, surprisingly, unmounted BUT they apprehended highwaymen effectively...

1829 saw Sir Robert 'Bobby' Peel's 'Peelers' organise the first proper police force. The 'Peeler' had a winter and a summer uniform and his height was augmented by standing on his stiff top hat when required! Pay was 17

shillings a week (about 80p). You had to bath frequently; you mustn't sit in a pub; gossip with the public (especially the ladies); nor vote. You had one week of UNPAID leave.

The Edwardian era saw the coming of women into the police force. They dealt with children, women, missing persons - and all between 7am-11pm. Out-of-hours, in came a 'Matron' for these duties.

Our very own Derek Heath was press-ganged into modelling P.C. 639's tunic, with cape buttons showing his Force (Oxon), his cork helmet (Royal Berks). He had a rosewood truncheon secreted in his leg pocket; a Hudson & Co (Birmingham) whistle (phased out in the 1970s); a football-type rattle to raise the alarm; a pocket book; and an 1870s bull-nosed magnification oil lamp which you could cover for covert work! You had handcuffs which were difficult to use on nimble miscreants and it was easy - and it often happened - to cuff yourself (Ken did); you had a birch for caning males over 7 years old, and a drinks bottle.

Derek was then (semi) attired as a CHIEF Constable...

Ken found his own TV fame, participating in programmes such as *Who do you think you are?*, *The Amelia Dyer Case*, *The Great Train Robbery and the 1987 Hungerford Massacre*.

Ken said that the Police Force (2010) will soon be NON-uniformed, and casually attired.

The Thames Valley Police Force originally comprised Bucks, Oxon and Royal Berkshire, Reading and Oxford. And guess what? The Chief Constable is a lady.

Thank you Ken, for your fantastic and liberating talk. Long may your museum thrive.

Rosemary Bond

Curator: 0118 932 5748. Email: ken.wells@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk

Hall Chairs - Many of you help to put the chairs away at the hall after the talks and this is much appreciated, but, if possible, please avoid dragging the chairs across the floor. Carriers are available to move stacks of chairs, or please carry the chairs singly to the back of the hall before stacking them. Thank you.

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 - Victorian Christmas events are on 12/13 and 19/20 December, with a Victorian Family Christmas Evening on Sat 12th December.

Willis Museum - *The Museum has a series of special exhibitions during the coming months.*

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

19th Nov. 'The Swing Riots in Hampshire of 1830' by David Rymill of the Hampshire Record Office.

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

No lecture in December

The York Nativity Play at Aldermaston Church will be on 10th to 12th December at 8pm. For free tickets send an SAE to: V Hall, The Gables, Church Road, Aldermaston. RG7 4LR . This will be the 53rd year the play has been performed at the church.

There will be a **Christmas Fayre** on Sat 21st November from 1.30 - 4pm at St Paul's Hall, The Green, Tadley, in aid of the Church and Hall funds.
(We use the Hall, so your support will be of benefit to TADS)

AGM and Social

Carol Stevens would very much appreciate help with the refreshments at the meeting. She can be contacted on 0118 9701578, or just pitch in on the evening.

*TADS annual membership is £10 per person.
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