



December 2009

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

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

# ***TADS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING***

***FOLLOWED BY A SOCIAL***



**AGM News** - The following are standing down from the Committee at the AGM: Bob Brown, Chairman; Derek Ward, vice-Chairman; Derek Heath, programme organiser; and we have already lost the treasurer. Carol Stevens, Ian Burn, Peter McNulty, and Richard Brown are willing to re-stand for the new Committee. We also have 2 new volunteers for the Committee - David Bowman and Valerie Gilbert.

With this newsletter you will find a Nomination Form for the Committee and 2 copies of the Constitution: the current one, and one containing 3 amendments that the Committee think are necessary.

*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)*

**[www.tadshistory.com](http://www.tadshistory.com)**

**TADS Meeting 20th January 2010:  
‘Watermills on the Thames’  
By Brian Eighteen**

**November meeting report (18/11/09)**

**A History of Punch & Judy by Alix Booth**

Punch and Judy ‘professor’ Alix told about 50 TADS members and visitors the history of Punch and Judy, using her own puppets to illustrate the role of each character and the changes that have taken place over the years. This most unlikely showman had us rolling in the aisles with laughter at times. We would have been very happy just to have had the Punch show, she was so good.

Did you know Punch and Judy was originally just for adults? The children's show came late in its history, starting about 1851. Alix tones down some of the more gruesome bits in her children's show. (When did children ever mind gruesome?)

There are records and illustrations of glove puppets going back as far as the 14th century. The puppets probably performed religious medieval morality plays, and Punch echoes this as he is also against the devil.

Mr Punch, as we know him, is 343 years old. He derived from the Italian Comedia del Arte character called Pulcinella (still performing in Italy) and although by 1737 there were similar puppets throughout Europe, the British Punch is the only one to get away with murder, and many of them.

Samuel Pepys watched a show in Covent Garden in 1662. This would have been performed by big string puppets, but these were very expensive and gradually the cheaper glove puppets took over and still reign today.

The traditional British version of the story evolved between 1760 and 1840. Alix showed us a book with a script for the show written by Puccini dating from 1828. Puccini was alleged to make a £10 a day from his street shows. (A lot of money in those days). Punch gradually moved into drawing rooms as well as the streets, but it was the railways which took him to the seaside along with the new holiday makers, and there he remains today.

Many of the seaside shows are performed by descendants of families who have been doing them for several generations.

The puppets Alix uses are much, much larger than any I remember seeing before. She used about eighteen in all, starting with Samuel Pepys reading from his Diary describing the Covent Garden show. Most of her puppets were traditional, but there were a couple of modern Political additions and some other variations. She performed the 'mincing machine' routine with a Frenchman puppet in a beret and blue striped jersey. We were convulsed with laughter at this, especially when the last of the sausages came out with blue and white stripes!

If you are visiting London on the second Sunday in May, you could go to the Punch and Judy Fair and annual Church Service at St Paul's Church, Covent Garden. You might even get to one of the showmen/women/or youngsters to show you their swazzle, the instrument which is placed in the mouth to produce the extraordinary voice of Mr Punch. Alix said the swazzle is not easy to use, but all too easy to swallow!

What was the reason for schoolgirl Alix getting into Punch and Judy? Would you believe it was because her mother had a horse box.

Thank you 'Professor' Alix for a wonderful talk, full of social history, amazing voices, great fun, and definitely not politically correct.

Richard Brown

Website: [www.alixpartypuppets.co.uk](http://www.alixpartypuppets.co.uk)



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

### **Hampshire Record Office**

*For Information see [www3.hants.gov.uk/whatson-hro](http://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. Santa will also be at the Museum

**Willis Museum** - *The Museum is using the new gallery to stage a series of special exhibitions during the coming months.*

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

January 21st The development of the British sword from the Civil War to the Great War - Ian Williams

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

14th Jan. Treasures in Late Roman Britain. Richard Hobbs - British Museum

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## **AGM and Social**

### **Please bring a contribution of food for the Social.**

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

**Subscriptions can be paid at the AGM. Still £10 per person.**

**Photographs.** We hope to display some local photographs during the social.



**The Committee wish everybody a  
Merry Christmas and a happy New Year.**

*TADS annual membership is £10 per person.  
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