

November 2010



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

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

**My Railways and their
development, 1830-1940
(West coast main line)**

Dr Peter Ellis

(Everybody welcome - visitors £2.00)

TADS AGM will be held on Wednesday 15 December

to be followed by a social.

The existing Committee are willing to continue, but additional members are welcome. The Project Group could use more help.

*Comments, queries and suggestions to Richard Brown (0118) 9700100,
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www.tadshistory.com

Last Month's Talk 20/10/10

60 years of AWE by Kate Pyne AWE technical historian

For some TADS' members, probably having lived within a 10-mile radius of Aldermaston for a long time and been happily oblivious to 'Over-the-Wire's' many, many successes, the thought of HEAVY atomic science could be a bit daunting. Don't we hear more of AWE's problems? eg 1978, plutonium found in that the lungs of AWRE laundry workers; or the famous/infamous Pangbourne waste pipeline? What about atomic technical data, terra technology (10 to the power of 12), nano technology, gigabytes, gigabits, big bombs then little bombs, atomic and hydrogen; UGT (underground testing); lasers (Orion laser 2009); Christmas Island with its tent city and land crabs; Imperial measure muddled with Metric measure!; enormous libraries; demolition of Boundary Hall; feral cats; protected species in secret places ---- a daunting tip of the iceberg. Then how resilient and disciplined the spirit can be when required! Kate's talk was peppered with her own views and her mirth, and the mirth of a myriad of empathetic (past and present) Aldermaston science brains in the room.

Anyway about 70 of us ENJOYED the tantalising talk, whether some of us could visualise the finer scientific points or not!

The camaraderie was palpable, even though some of us took a sly look round the room see if there were any suspicious spy characters, skulking and gleaning information, though it was all 'DECLASSIFIED'

(The Editor's KGB T-shirt was a joke - honest).

During WWII there were murmurings and moves by Birmingham University in 1940 to have an atomic bomb. The village of Tadley became 'atomic' in the early 1950s when it was deemed by Ernest Bevin that Britain must have a bomb with a 'Bl...y British Union flag' on it! Enthusiastic scientists, such as one Dr. Bill 'Caesar' Penney, he of the red sports car and 'a lovely man but with a killer instinct', sought a new site, because Fort Halstead, Kent was far too small. Aldermaston Airfield was chosen. Also used were Henry VIII's secure Royal Navy cannon-making site at Woolwich Arsenal (explosives); Foulness Island near Shoeburyness Gunnery Range, Essex (test firings); RAE Farnborough, Hants (bomb casings); Burghfield (Berks) where the bits and pieces were and are assembled; Cardiff (components) till 1995; Windscale (now Sellafield),

Cumbria (decontamination/ waste disposal); and Lab 1 Orfordness (Suffolk) was where the Blue Danube bomb was prepared for tests with its 2 tons of high explosives, and where the first ingot of plutonium was cast in June 1952. (Orfordness is now decommissioned and a National Trust nature site.) Blacknest, Brimpton (Berks) was the home of some apprentices and now houses AWE Forensic Seismology.

Kate said that recently the remaining Blue Danube bomb was parked on its trailer somewhere inside AWE and the 'MoD Plods' put a parking ticket on it. Kate had to pay up!

The mid 1950s saw Aldermaston Airfield preparing plutonium for weapons. The Newbury Weekly News said it was 'something to do with Atomic Energy and High Explosive Research.'

So the Age of Secrecy was born and it continues now in the age of cyber and other terrorism. No local asks what goes on 'Over-the-Wire' ----- just the Ban the Bomb types who get stuck in and dug in.... As some sage said ---- we have had all these years of peace in Great Britain because of our own nuclear capability ---- and Tadley wouldn't be Tadley without AWE.

Thank you, Kate, for your lively lecture.

Rosemary Bond

Go and visit (if you have the correct credentials!) kate.pyne@awe.co.uk

Hearing Loop and Audio System

These have been installed and will be in use at next week's talk. We may need to adjust the settings to suit the acoustics of the hall when it is full.

A London Walk on Saturday 11th December.

Several TADS Members are doing a WEA course on London's graveyards and cemeteries. The tutor is Val Pretlove who did the Fleet Street talk and walk. As an adjunct to the course, Val is going to lead a walk round some of the burial places of the City in the morning, with the afternoon free. There may be some spare places.

For more information contact Carol or Richard. (Tel. Nos on page 1)

A Silchester Calendar

With scenes of flora, fauna and weather from around Silchester, the calendars are £6 each and available from Nancy Jones on 0118 9700546.

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

11:00am Sunday 28 Nov - Celebrate Milestones 10th Birthday with a street party for children with Punch & Judy, clowns, traditional party games, food and birthday cake and a competition for the best fancy dress costume based on Victorian to 1945. Normal admission charges apply. Food for street party will cost £2.50 per child (aged 5-15 yrs) and must be pre-booked with your entrance ticket on arrival.

Willis Museum

The Mary Rose exhibition is on until 24th December.

7:00pm Thursday 25 Nov 2010 - 'The King's Servant' - a lecture. Through parchment, brasses, stained glass and artefacts, explore how servants in Henry VIII's court used clothing to reveal their different ranks and roles. Tickets £5. Telephone: 01256 465902

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

November 18th - The history of Thornycroft, Part 2 (1930s to 1973) by Chris Tree of the Thornycroft Society Ltd.

Basingstoke Archeological & History Society (7.30 at Church Cottage)

Dec - no public meeting.

Iris Stanley Hon. Member. (6/12/1929 – 28/10/2010)

Iris was a true "Tad" in every sense. She was born, lived and died in Shyshack Lane Tadley. A quiet and highly capable lady who loved the area and its people. After her family came her love of history. Over many years she had meticulously copied and indexed, in her beautifully neat hand, all the census (1841 – 1901), and records relating to Tadley and district. Only recently she was particularly pleased to have electronically indexed the 1911 census for TADS. We will miss not only her presence, but her knowledge of local people, places and events.

*TADS annual membership is £10 per person.
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