



October 2011

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

**Next meeting - Wednesday 19th October 2011  
at St. Paul's Church Hall, 8.00 to 9.30pm**

***'Basingstoke and its  
contribution to world culture'***

***By Rupert Willoughby***

*(Rupert will have copies of his book of the same name and some of his  
other books for sale at the meeting. He will sign them if required.  
Prices are around £10.)*

*(Everybody welcome - visitors £2.50)*

**TADS AGM & Social** will now be on **14th December** not the 21st, as  
it has been decided the 21st is too near Christmas.

*Comments, queries and suggestions to Richard Brown (0118) 9700100,  
e-mail: [richard@ilexind.plus.com](mailto:richard@ilexind.plus.com) or Carol Stevens (0118) 9701578*

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

**TADS Meeting 16th November 2011:**

**‘The Story of Thorneycroft’**

**By Christopher Tree**

Last Meeting 21st September:

**Frost, Freezes & Fairs.**

**By Ian Currie**

Ian is a weatherman through and through and wore a splendid weather symbol jumper to prove it. If you want to know about weather history, author and broadcaster Ian is your man. Over 40 TADS and guests were engulfed by a verbal avalanche of weather facts concerning the history of cold winters in Great Britain, and many other weather things in passing.

Since the end of the last ice age, about 10,000 years ago, there have been periods in recorded history when it has been very much colder than it is today. (Equally there have been warmer periods). At one time there were polar bears in Scotland who walked to there over the pack ice.

The Thames was recorded as freezing over as far back as 250AD, and 1092, 1141, & 1209 were all notably cold. The first weather diary was started at Oxford in the 1340s so there are consistent records, if not measurements, from then on. The winter of 1564/5 was recorded as being very cold, but it was the ‘little ice age’ from 1677 through to the end of the 1700s which saw the great frost fairs on the Thames. Frost fairs were also held on other rivers including the Ouse at York, the upper Severn, the Medway and the Wye. The fairs have been captured in many paintings and engravings and could be of immense size. In 1683/4 there were possibly 100,000 people attending the London fair to enjoy food, including roasts carried out on the ice, alcoholic drinks, coffee, gingerbread and much, much more from the many stalls. In later years there was the addition of things such as gambling, acrobats, bear baiting, circuses with elephants, cock fighting, coconut shies, swing-boats, and stalls of traders from the London markets.

One unexpected aspect was the setting up of printing presses on the ice, which printed souvenir handbills complete with your name.

The fairs were organised by the watermen, who normally rowed the ferryboats on the river but because of the ice were out of work. Often it was free to get on the ice but cost a penny to get off!

The last frost fair on the Thames at London was in 1814 and although many winters since have been colder, including 2010, the Thames never froze over again. Why?

The old London Bridge with its 19 spans was a major factor in slowing the flow of the river and holding back any ice which formed. The bridge was replaced in 1831. The Victorian embankments greatly narrowed the river and together with dredging to help access by large ships significantly speeded up the flow of the river. Without the obstruction of the old bridge and the greater rate of flow, the salt sea water now flows much further up the Thames and lowers the temperature at which the water will freeze. There is also the warm water put into the river from various industries, and the heat island effect of the vast mass of centrally heated buildings in the modern city.

If you think the last two winters were cold, be glad you were not around in 1844 when there were avalanches on the South Downs and on 28<sup>th</sup> January at 9am a temperature of 1° Fahrenheit (-17°C) was recorded in a Hampshire drawing room!

Thank you Ian for your enlightening talk.

Richard Brown

Ian's website can be found at [www.frostedearth.com](http://www.frostedearth.com)

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**Hampshire Field Club, Local History Section** visit to Tadley on 1st October hosted by TADS.

The event was attended by 25 members of the Field Club. They were given a talk by Carol in the URC Hall and shown several of our photographic displays which they much admired. After that they were taken on a walk around the Tadley Conservation Area including a look inside the historic URC Meeting House. In the afternoon there were visits to Pamber Priory Church and Old St. Peter's Church. Thank you to those TADS members who helped.

Following the visit a letter of thanks was received with a nice donation.

## ***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.** For coming events:

Tel. 01256 477766 or see: [www3.hants.gov.uk/milestones/whatson](http://www3.hants.gov.uk/milestones/whatson)

4th - 28th Oct. There is Half term Halloween Fun at Milestones.

### **Willis Museum**

The museum is running an ever changing series of special exhibitions in the Sainsbury Gallery.

These include the Basingstoke Art Club exhibition from 12th Nov. to 3rd Dec.

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

20th Oct. - AGM & members' "Show and Tell"

17th Nov. - 'The bank note makers: the History of Portals' by Dave Stone.

### **Basingstoke Archaeological & History Society**

10th November - 'Celts from the West' by Professor Sir Barry Cunliffe

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### **A New U3A group in Tadley.**

This will be a Sunday afternoon social event in St. Paul's Church Hall, meeting on the second Sunday of every month. For further information please contact our own Derek Heath on 0118 9814707 or email: [derekheath@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:derekheath@tiscali.co.uk)

*(NB. U3A stands for the University of the Third Age).*

***TADS annual membership is £12 per person.  
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