



March 2012

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

**Next meeting - Wednesday 21st March 2011  
at St. Paul's Church Hall, 8.00 to 9.30pm**

# ***'The secret Thames'***

***by Duncan McKay***

*(Everybody welcome - visitors £2.50)*

## **A New TADS Book.**

Tadley Tracks and Tadley Facts is now at the printers and will be available for purchase at the April meeting at a heavily discounted price. The book is a compilation of walks around Tadley with maps, directions, photographs, and information. It will be spiral bound and pocket size for easy use. *(Also see p.5)*

*Comments, queries and suggestions to Richard Brown (0118) 9700100,  
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**[www.tadshistory.com](http://www.tadshistory.com)**

**TADS Meeting 18th April 2012:**

**‘Berkshire lady fliers’**

by Geoff Beckett

Last meeting - 15th February

**Timber Framed Buildings in Tadley & North Hampshire**

by **Bill Fergie,**

**Chairman of Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust**

A woodworm! It would be rather rude to call anyone that, but Bill obviously has a life-long passion for WOOD, especially oak, and timber-framed buildings are just up his street. And there's a good sprinkling of them in our area.

Judging by the 60 + TADS' members who crowded in to hear this personable man, many of us are 'woodworms' or even 'anoraks' (*'anorak' – 20<sup>th</sup> century Inuit word for a hooded jacket or someone who is obsessively involved in something generally regarded as boring, unfashionable, or not worthy of such commitment. - Chambers 21<sup>st</sup> century dictionary*).

What utter anorak balderdash! Bill and we TADS members have a healthy interest in wood and the 'recycling' of old buildings to maintain and conserve them for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and much beyond....

Dendrochronology is the name of the game. That's tree ring dating to you and me. It helps to identify the age of the timber, be it an ancient building or a living tree. Bill says the science works very well - or not at all. Mostly the former, luckily.

Dendrochronology involves taking a plug of wood using a hollow drill the size of a pencil and analysing the resultant 1 or 1/2mm wide rings - sort of bar-coding them. A 100 year old tree has 100 rings, wide and narrow, according to the state of the climate at the time of growth.

The extremely bright dendrochronologist is usually a PhD, or similar and he/she can determine the tree's good and bad years, whether the resultant building is high quality or not - the goodies have no remaining sap wood because that contains bugs and fungi spores - but it makes the dendros' job difficult without sap wood. And dendros don't come cheap.

Many a New World country would DIE to have 'history' more than 200 years old. Many British buildings are much older e.g. Hatch Cottage, Church road, Tadley 1496-1528, built in phases, according to the dendrochronologist. This cottage is a cruck building, and the proud owners glowed as Bill discussed their home. Crucks are found only in certain parts of Britain, mainly West, South West and South Central. They have huge, curved oak timbers, floor to roof, like a whale's open mouth. Smoke from the central open fire went out through a hole at the top of the building.

Then, as now, householders built and extended their dwellings. That's why Hatch Cottage is dendro-dated as it is (1496-1528). Crucks went out of favour because of the open-hall construction and the difficulty of adding storeys and attics. The joining pegged timbers were so skillfully built you 'couldn't get a fag paper between the timbers', Bill said. Medieval buildings were constructed with green unseasoned wood which is full of sap. Furniture was made with seasoned wood. The earliest known cruck building in North Hampshire is No 1, Somerset Cottages, Bentley, built between 1311-1312.

Church Cottage, Basingstoke has been dendro-dated and found to have been built in 3 bits; 16<sup>th</sup> century in the middle with 2 sympathetically built 19<sup>th</sup> century wings either end, plus an 18<sup>th</sup> century barn because the place was owned by a rich businessman and the barn was his workplace for cloth dyeing. He even changed the course of the River Loddon for an on-tap water supply!

Thatched Corner Cottage, Baughurst, near the Badger's Wood pub, is possibly one of the last crucks to be built in Hampshire. It had an open hall and central fireplace and dates from 1580-1581.

Hartley Wespall Church near Basingstoke, has very rare cusped timbers, which is a point where 2 curved timbers meet. It dates from 1335-1364. The Victorians changed some of the building, saving or mutilating it according to one's point of view. Cusping is a West Country technique, which proved that builders moved around. This church was financed by the Bishop of Bath and Wells, who also owned Hartley Wespall Manor.

Burghclere Manor, 14<sup>th</sup> century, was owned by the Bishop of Winchester who had access to carpenters from all over the country. The present owner has invested heavily in its restoration and exposed the medieval curved braces and removed the aisle posts which got in the way at dances and parties!

14<sup>th</sup> century Anchor House, London Road, Basingstoke, was formerly a pub next door to the Red Lion Hotel, and had coaching inn status. It had black roof timbers which signified soot discolouration from the open fire and NOT fire damage.

Court Farm Barn, Overton 1496, was built before the farmhouse, 1504-5, so that the farmer could work. It had been owned by the Bishop of Winchester.

Kingsclere's Falcon pub, owned by the rich Winchester College and built in 5 bits, the dendro dating showed 1445-1487. It had jettying.

Burrells Farm, Tadley. Is it our oldest building? It's something of an enigma with its central hall and pantries to the left and the high end to the right where the parlour and private rooms were. Maybe Bill and his mates will solve the mysteries one day.

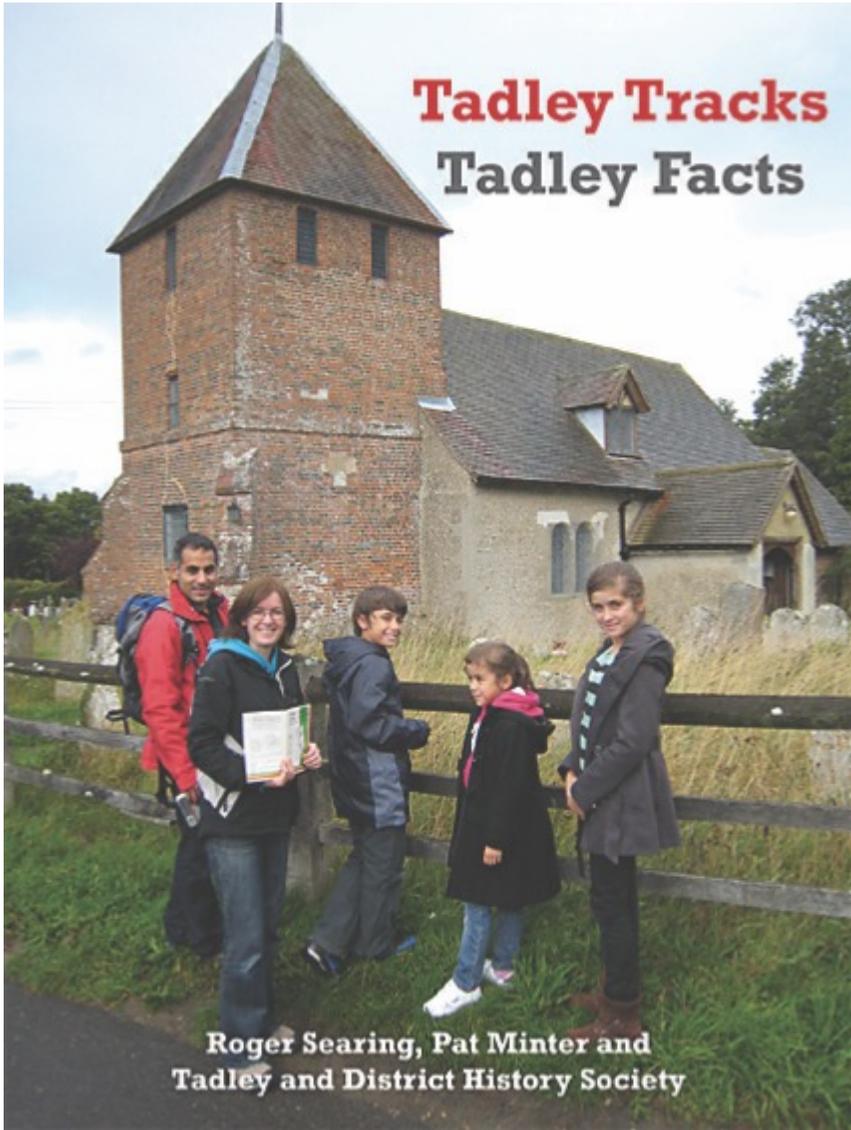
Meanwhile, we thank Bill for his boundless enthusiasm. Long live 'anoraks' and 'woodworms'!

Rosemary Bond

Hatch Cottage,  
Tadley.

In this view of the end wall, the large cruck beams of the timber frame are clearly visible at each side.





This is the cover of the new book. It is based on the walks originally published many years ago by founder members Roger Searing and Pat Minter. Many of the walks were re-printed in Project News over the last few years. In this book they are brought together in a handy size with new coloured maps, new photographs, revised information, and one completely new walk.

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

**Hampshire Record Office** *For information ring 01962846154 or see [www3.hants.gov.uk/whatson-hro](http://www3.hants.gov.uk/whatson-hro)*

**Milestones Museum.** For coming events: Tel. 01256 477766 or see: [www3.hants.gov.uk/milestones/whatson](http://www3.hants.gov.uk/milestones/whatson)

21st Feb - 15th April 'LEGO ® Mania at Milestones Museum' Come and watch 150,000 Lego bricks being placed one by one to create a magnificent minifigure scale model of the great Tudor Palace, Basing House. Built by Duncan Titchmarsh, the UK's only certified professional LEGO builder. Plus many other things involving the little bricks.

### **Willis Museum**

2:30pm Wednesday 28 Mar. - A cream tea at the Willis and a talk about the history of drinking tea. £4 to include the tea. Pre Booking is Essential - please call the Museum on 01256 465902 or pop in to book a place.

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

19th April - 'What the Butler Saw' by John Pitman. More insight and stories of what went on in the 'Big House' Houses...

**Basingstoke Archaeological & History Society** *(7.30 at Church Cottage)*

12th April - 'Castles in Wessex' by Alan Turton, former Curator of Basing House

### **Silchester Roman Town**

19th April, 7.30p.m. for 8p.m. Silchester Village Hall. A talk by Professor Michael Fulford, University of Reading, about last year's dig of Silchester Roman Town (Calleva Atrebatum) and the plans for 2012. £3 at the door.

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