

June 2012



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

**Next meeting - Wednesday 20th June 2012
at St. Paul's Church Hall, 8.00 to 9.30pm**

**'Biscuits, Bats and Balls -
the story of Huntley and
Palmers'**

*(An outline of the development of Huntley and Palmers, its social significance
to Reading and a little bit of information on Cricket at the Factory)*

by Martin Bishop

(Everybody welcome - visitors £2.50)

The Tadley Tracks, Tadley Facts Book is selling steadily and is on sale at the Library and at Profile Print and Copy in the Bishopswood Road shops, price £8.00. It will be on sale at the coming meeting along with other TADS publications.

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

TADS Meeting 18th July 2012
‘Women in Tudor and Stuart Berkshire’
by Joan Dils

Last meeting - 16th May.

The bank note makers - the history of Portals

By Dave Stone, (employee of 27 years' standing)

2012 is the 300th year of Portals' existence as bank note makers in England. And, they do it near us at Overton, near the 18th century 'motorway' of the River Test and on the picturesque Hampshire Downs. And they are still like a family firm.... Due to the religious turmoil in the Toulouse area of S.W. France in 1204, the Portal family, people of some standing, always seemed to be in the thick of it. It's called 'biting the bullet'.

The Portals continued biting the bullet at the highest level: Oldric de Portal clashed with Pope Innocent III in the 13th century. As non-Roman Catholics, the Protestant Portals were Huguenots and in 1562 they were expelled from Toulouse amid legal gassings, fires and massacres. Tenaciously they tried to make a go of things 'til around 1685, when after hiding some of the Portal children in a bread oven, by hook or by crook said children and some of the clan came to good old England - especially the Laverstoke area of Hampshire.

Henri became a naturalised Brit. in 1711 and Anglicised his name to 'Henry'. He married a local girl, had 8 children and utilised Bere and Laverstoke corn mills to power paper making (1712). He continued biting bullets....

Henry didn't make your usual paper; he made bank notes, then a niche market, and he made them for the Bank of England from 1726 onwards. There were lots of banks, but he went straight to the top ... Although the Chinese had made bank notes centuries earlier, they were not common or wanted here, as people liked the feel of gold.

The Portals factory was very much a family affair, including the workers: in 1785 frequents feasts were held but became Saturday celebrations because many men became too drunk to make paper!

Paper making seems to have been a 'man thing'. Bank note paper is made of chopped and beaten COTTON fibres. Cylindrical moulds had paper mats and then

the pulp was drained and dried out and a sizing agent added to stop the ink 'bleeding' into the paper. Sheets were made 700mm by 800mm and then printed. Firstly there were only white bank notes.

Watermarked paper is hard to counterfeit and the 'windowed' security thread (metal, and woven in and out) of 1986, is harder to copy than the straight-line thread.

Bank notes worth £1 in 1750 are £85 in 2012 money, the wages of 1750 are worth 10 times more today. In 1711 the British population was 5.5 million and in 1811, 9 million.

Bank notes were moved from Laverstoke Mill using the River Test in early times, then by wagon, then by coach. Who knows for 2012? Dave was necessarily secretive!

Joseph Portal continued the onwards and upwards trend, establishing himself as a landowner (Laverstoke House and estate, now ex-racing driver Jody Scheckter's property) and also as High Sheriff of Hampshire. He died in 1793.

The bank note business has fluctuated throughout the ages, but in bad times Portals used their OWN money to keep their skilled workers. As in the Industrial Revolution, machines made workers riot, those at Portals included. Excise Officers paid random visits and by 1824, the workers had rights. The 1833 Factory Act banned child workers.

1860 saw Portals manufacturing paper for India; and in 1880 they made the Postal Order paper.

In 1908, Portals introduced shift-working because they were so busy, and they now made Old Age Pension books worth 5 shillings (25 pence) per week. Also, a canteen was built! Ten shilling (50 pence) notes and £1 notes were coloured and, in 1928 printed on both sides.

With whispers of WWII's approach, a 'shadow decoy' factory was constructed at Overton, but it was bombed twice in 1941. With the usual enthusiasm Portals had it running again in 3 days. Bank note workers were in a Reserved Occupation. By 1945 high-denomination bank notes of £30, £40, £50, £100, £300, and £1,000 were discontinued. Portals became a public company in 1947 and they were bought up by the Guernsey Huguenot family, de la Rue, in 1995, but are still known as 'Portals'.

Although Portals makes bank notes for much of the world (not USA), what of the future? Dave said that Australia is nearly bank note free and people talk of a cashless society...

Anyway, Portals has stuck in there for 300 years this year, and long may it continue.

Thank you Dave, for your thoughtful talk.

Rosemary Bond

What's on? Events which may be of interest

Hampshire Record Office For information ring 01962846154 or see www3.hants.gov.uk/whatson-hro

Milestones Museum. For coming events: Tel. 01256 477766 or see: www3.hants.gov.uk/milestones/whatson

10:00am Sunday 24th June. A Vintage Festival - a celebration of the myriad of vintage styles.

Willis Museum

Saturday, 23rd June. Family Games.

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

21st June - Food in Roman Britain by Sally Grainger, food historian.

Silchester Roman Town - The Reading University 16th Insula IX dig will be from 2nd July to 12th August.

The Tudor House at Southampton

first opened its doors as a public museum in 1912. To celebrate on Sunday 29th July from 10am to 5pm we will turn back the clocks 100 years. Entrance will be just 6p per person! Meet costumed Edwardian staff, experience an Edwardian school lesson, try object handling, dress up in replica costumes and have your photo taken in our Edwardian photo booth. Contact : 023 8083 4536 to book a FREE tour of the house.



Pamber Heath beacon celebrates the Queen's Diamond Jubilee -.

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