



**April 2013**

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

**Next meeting - Wednesday 17th April 2013  
at St. Paul's Church Hall, 8.00 to 9.30pm**

# ***'The Victorian Defences of Britain'***

***By Michael Forrest***

*(Everybody welcome - visitors £2.50)*

**Committee News** - The Committee are considering how to commemorate the centenary of the start of World War I next year. There are several good ideas but all will require help from members, either in the form of contributed items of family history or hands on help. In particular, someone will be needed to lead the project.

Volunteers please contact Carol. (See below).

*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 15th May 2013:**  
**‘A Cockney Childhood’**  
by Maggie Filkins

**TADS Meeting 20th March**

**SIGNPOSTS AND VILLAGE SIGNS**  
By Brian Locock

Big ones, small ones, some as big as yer 'ead; old ones, new ones, rare ones, tall slim ones, lumpy ones, funny ones (Little Snoring, Norfolk), kempt ones, unkempt ones; black, white and red ones; tile and brick ones, picturesque or ugly ones, painted ones, chiselled stone or wood ones; monochrome ones, cast iron ones; stone with ebony ones, canal ones, dead woman's ditch ones, high, low, eroded and advertising ones (AA & RAC).

That's signposts and village signs.

Brian is also interested in letter boxes, the Dorset Steam Fair, churches, bridges and market crosses. But they are other stories waiting to be told. As he said, 'one thing leads to another'. Brian's wife also seemed enthusiastic about these hobbies...

The Romans thought milestones were good for their network of roads in Britain 2 millennia ago but there aren't many left now, and those that are, are evidence of turnpike (pay as you go) roads. Charles II managed to tie us down from any old miles to STATUTE miles in 1670. In 1744 milestones were compulsory and made of stone, measuring about 2' (0.6m) high and contained some odd spellings....

Luckily for some counties they still have many milestones.

Sadly, they are a magnet for some 'collectors'!... Pamber Heath's (Hants) Impstone is lumpily unproven Roman.

Signposts - 'fingers' point the way. Dorset has many good ones, the Ministry of Transport designed them nationally in 1921 and standardised them in 1964.

However, some 'maverick' counties kept their different and interesting signposts.

Road numbers were introduced between 1919 and 1923 with the numbers radiating out of London in a clockwise direction, 1 pointing North, as in A1 or M1.

As Prince of Wales, George V's son Edward (briefly the uncrowned Edward VIII in 1936) encouraged Village Signs along with Howard Carter, nephew of THE Howard Carter of Tutankhamen fame. East Anglia, Kent, Sussex, Dorset Scotland and Northern Ireland probably have the most picturesque signs and Brian showed

stunning photographs of many of them which beautifully illustrate the individuality, history and aspirations of each village.

Tadley has quite recently had 'town' status, and its sign reflects modernity while encompassing forestry, crossed besom brooms and nuclear energy. Silchester (Hants) has its own picturesque sign by the village hall, denoting its 'Roman-ness' of up to AD407 and the current interest in Calleva Atrebatum.

Naturally, wayfarers' milestones, village signs and finger posts are removed at times of war. The trouble is, some go 'walkabout'! And, possibly New World countries lacking history-as-we-know-it, feel the need for a souvenir of lil' Old England. (Just like some students' accommodation contains road work signage etc.!)

We have to bear in mind there have been new roads, road widening schemes, motorways, short cuts, diversions and so on and now some milestones appear to be in the bushes. Difficult to photograph, Brian said.

Some milestones showed miles and furlongs ('furrow-longs', 8 furlongs = 1 mile, the amount a plough horse can work before resting)

Some old village signs show scenes once-relevant to that village: Tenterden (Kent) depicts the SEA coast which has now receded. Biddenden (Kent) show Siamese (conjoined) twins who were born there in 1100 AD and died 1134. Blakeney (Norfolk): sails and East Anglian windmills. Potter Heigham (Norfolk) has a fine 2-sided sign, as has Wymondham (pronounced 'Wyndham') Norfolk that shows the Market Cross and Abbey. Swaffham (Norfolk) now has a 1930s wooden sign carved by the local woodwork teacher. Worstead (Norfolk) as in the woollen cloth which made the village rich and famous. Woolpit (Suffolk) had, in the 10th century, a pit for trapping wolves.

Abinger Hammer (Surrey) hammer pond country for medieval iron manufacturing.

Bisley (Surrey) there are crossed guns on this world-famous shootery's sign. Battle (East Sussex) crossed swords from William the Conqueror's epic 1066 battle.

Winchelsea (Sussex) another former seaside village where the sea has receded.

Billingshurst (West Sussex) shows the Roman soldiers on the Roman road, Stane Street. Hayward's Heath (West Sussex) Civil War sign just before Oliver Cromwell's interregnum of 1649-1660. Bridlington (Yorkshire) this sign highlights the idea of twinning one's village/town with a foreign one (Germany) to promote friendship and bonhomie.

And so the list goes interestingly on, as we amble round our villages and towns with ancient and modern history, learning as we go.

Thank you, Brian, for showing us the tip of your historical iceberg of all sorts of signage. As you said, it can be quite hazardous obtaining information and photographs from country waysides with 21st century fast-moving traffic!

Rosemary Bond

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

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

**Willis Museum** ( Tel: 08456035635) - The museum is running an ever changing series of special exhibitions in the Sainsbury Gallery. Forthcoming exhibits include contemporary and local artists. There are also activities aimed at young people.

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

April 18th: "The Lavender Story", by Tim Butler.

May 16th: 'The coming of the railway to Basingstoke', by David Brace.

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

May 9th 'Excavations of Heathrow terminal 5' by Ken Walsh, Oxford Archaeology

**Basingstoke Heritage Society**

April 16th ' Memories of Basingstoke' An illustrated talk by John Holmes, using photos his father took of the streets as they looked just before the bulldozers moved in. At Church Cottage, Church Street at 7.30 after the AGM.

**Tadley WEA**

May 11th - 'The Birth of Astronomy', a one day course at the Ambrose Allen Centre. For further information on this course please ring Jan Smith on 01189832251.

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**History in the Making**

We are sorry to report the death of TADS member John Aling at the age of 87 in early April. John was a 'Bevin Boy' in a Staffordshire coal mine during the war. Later he was a printer with his own business in Basingstoke. In retirement he had many interests including collecting clocks , stamps and coins. Our condolences go to his family.

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