



November 2013

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

**Next meeting - Wednesday 20th November 2013
at St. Paul's Church Hall, 8.00 to 9.30pm**

**'The History of the Didcot, Newbury
and Southampton Railway'**

by Rex Hora

(Everybody welcome - visitors £2.50)

Committee News

As some of you may have noticed, the TADS Website has been unavailable for two or three weeks. This is because it had been hosted by Tadley computers for free for many years and this arrangement has come to an end. David Bowman is making alternative arrangements to get the site back up.

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

www.tadshistory.com

TADS Meeting 18th December 2013:
‘TADS AGM and Social’

Last Meeting 16th October

Roman Uniforms

by John Smith,

Lecturer and, now non-digging archaeologist extraordinaire

What did the Romans do for us? Lots. But a conquered country always wrecks what's good as well as the bad bits. Look around the world of the 21st century: Conquerors are despised....

The Romans were very 'modern' in their outlook. Their soldiers were employed from late teenage years when their bones would not deform, until the age of about 35. (Soldiers with Legionnaire training were known to work till 70 + years). They were a well-organised bunch of peacemakers who mostly COPIED, but improved on others' ideas. Each 'legionary' soldier was part of a 'century' under an officer called a 'centurion'.

Romans were not like the warlike Scandinavian Vikings who invaded us 800 years later. They were only kind to their families and raped and pillaged everyone else.

The conquering centurions and legionnaires had to be pretty tough. Their kit weighed approximately 30 kgs (66 lbs). The pay was good; about 250 denari a year. That's £18,000 in 2013. But you only got paid every 4 months, and as now, your bosses gave with one hand and took with the other!

For about 400 years, our conquerors dragged us Brits kicking and screaming from mud huts to bricks-and-mortar type well-designed houses, with central heating and mod for-the-day cons! No little 21st century shoe-box shaped houses were tolerated....

John showed us his Roman-type clothing, which has cost him £4,000, bearing in mind that 'real' chain mail costs £6,000 in the 21st century. Underneath the made-to-measure chain mail, a soldier wore something in white wool or linen

to help prevent chafing and to bear the brunt of the 12 kg (261 lb) approx. weight. He also had a leather tunic and trousers. Everything would have been put on at 4am. His helmet was also custom made, but re-allocated and re-customised if he was killed!

The weapons they used were brilliantly designed and could penetrate the sophisticated chain mail and armour of your enemy's body. Intricate footwear was also custom-made for each soldier of leather with soles studded for use on grass and mud. Footwear was copied from the Greeks. Some Roman spears had a range of 30 yards (10 metres). They used flame-blown metal to obtain a dull patina on their weapons. This was for camouflage - not like our 19th century Lord Nelson's glittering medals which gave him away! A pilum was a very long spear which went a very long way and was the only weapon INVENTED by the Romans. Different swords and daggers were used - the Putney sword came from the River Thames' mud With all this ironmongery you had to be careful not to cut yourself!

The soldiers put trophy badges on their scabbards. Only NCOs and officers could show off a ceremonial sword and the Roman belt looked like a tank trap, bearing bronze discs, lucky tokens and other decorations. A baldrick was a sword strap. Some men fought as foot soldiers, archers or sling throwers. Your 9kg (approx. 20lbs) shield was a useful camouflaged contraption of wood and leather showing which legion you belonged to by its artwork. It could be used as a shelter, and lots together looked like a 'tortoise'. Remember, in popular films the Romans are all clad in rubber. No damage there, then! John said an historical advisor on a film set was paid £1,000 a day, but no one listened to his advice. So he took the money and kept *shtumm.

John said the Romans brought us PEACE, prosperity, glass, spices, coins (even forged ones), various plants and animals, properly built roads etc. etc. Although their uniforms and ways evolved during their 400 year British occupation - and some intermarried with our forebears - we still didn't love them!

Thank you John, for your spiritual, enthusiastic and physical re-enactment of life for a Roman soldier.

Rosemary Bond

* shtumm - 1950s Yiddish for silent!!

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

Thursday 12 Dec 4.45 to 7.30. Christmas Shopping evening at Milestones Museum gift shop. There are some great gifts for all ages including traditional games, puzzles, sweets, retro items, jewellery, books, stocking fillers and lots more! Free entry to gift shop and cafe, museum closed

Willis Museum (Tel: 08456035635) - The museum is running an ever changing series of special exhibitions in the Sainsbury Gallery.

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

Nov. 21st: A window on 18th century country houses, by Nicola Pink.

History in the Making

John Alexander of Church Brook Farm, Tadley died on 20th August, his 68th birthday. John was a great man with a great presence. He was generous of mind and spirit to his family and the people of Tadley: the Scouts; Guides; Schools; environmental groups like 'Tadley Watch', etc, etc, whom he allowed to camp, walk and explore on the farm.

Since the Church Brook Farm Dairy finished, the farm has become a livery stables.

Condolences to Eileen and family.

Rosemary Bond

The Falcon Garage has been demolished and rebuilt to a large size with an attached small supermarket. It re-opened on 31st October. The supermarket and workshops are located on the site of the old Falcon Inn (Demolished March 2011).

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