



March 2014

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

**Next meeting - Wednesday 19th March 2014
at St. Paul's Church Hall, 8.00 to 9.30pm**

**‘The 1914
Mobilisation’
By Dan Allen**

(Everybody welcome - visitors £2.50)

Annual Subscriptions of £12 per person are now overdue. If you are not one of the 62 who have not re-joined and are paying at the March meeting will you please put your cheque or cash in an envelope bearing your name (envelopes provided at the meeting) . This will help the Treasurer recognise who the money is from and get the receipts prepared. Subs may also be sent via Carol (See bottom of Page 4 for address.)

*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 16th April 2014
‘The Ladies of the Tower of London’
By Tony Strafford

TADS last meeting - 18th February:
Basingstoke Workhouse

by
Barbara Large

The Workhouse. The Last Resort. Shock, Horror, Shame and Dread. The word ‘workhouse’ evokes misery and fear, especially if your forebears had been in one.

Whether ‘bastille’, ‘spike’, ‘the work ‘us’, or simply ‘the house’, the Victorian workhouse housed thousands of poor men, women and children as a last resort. As with form-filling for benefits in the 21st century, the authorities tried to dissuade you from entering the workhouse in the 19th century.

Although the Victorians (1837-1901) were religious, they were of the opinion that if you did not work, you did not eat. Patrick Colquhoun wrote in 1806, ‘poverty is a most necessary and indispensable ingredient in society. Without poverty, no labour, without labour, no riches’

Barbara has been in Basingstoke for only 5 years and luckily for North Hampshire she's got the workhouse research bug - although it necessitates ploughing through 60,000 plus documents in various states of legibility and mouldiness!

The Elizabethan Poor Law was no longer fit for purpose and when in the 18th century expensive wars, poor harvests, land enclosures and agricultural mechanisation were part of life, the Poor Law meant people were in dire straits. AND under the thumb of the rich and powerful.

In 1832 (the reign of William IV, 1830-1837) £700,000 was spent on the poor, with the greater part spent in the South!

Various laws were passed to MAKE people work and to remove beggars from the streets. It's the same old story in the 21st century. And it doesn't work.

In 1835 Winchester's population was 17,000; Andover's 16,500, with Basingstoke at 15,500. Help in Victorian times was necessarily untamed because the helpers were untrained.

Andover's workhouse was infamously awful and Charles Dickens included some of the horror in his books. The Chairman, the Rev Christopher Dodson, was a stubborn bully and the workhouse master, Colin McDougal, a nasty, alcoholic rapist. Their charges were starved and abused in the notorious Andover Scandal (1845). The residents exhumed bodies of humans and animals for their bones but were so hungry they sucked the disgracefully smelly bones before they crushed them. They also chewed candles through hunger. So people avoided Andover!

Good old Basingstoke. Its workhouse was run by William Lutley Sclater, an Upton Grey barrister who was kind and respectful to the living and the dead. In 1873 the workhouse was rebuilt with a boiler costing £120 and hot water. It was built on the site of the now-private Hampshire Clinic...

You didn't get sent to the workhouse. You applied. Then came the cleaning-up, your clothes were removed and a sort of uniform was worn. If you had something small and precious you probably buried it somewhere hoping to retrieve it later. The sexes were separated - so traumatic for siblings, husbands and wives. Tiny babies remained with Mum. There was a strict regime of work, meals and prayers.

If the adult(s) left the workhouse the whole family had to go.

Incidentally, actor Charlie Chaplin's mother lived in an East End of London workhouse by night, but the family all went out for the day!

Workhouse life included cleaning, cooking, laundry, mending, knitting, tailoring and shoe making etc..

Bone-crushing was banned in 1846. Stone-breaking was usually the vagrants' work but you had to break a hundredweight (cwt/112lbs/45kg) before they let you go.

Charles Dickens' novel Oliver Twist makes much of gruel (thin soup) but there was also bread, cheese, some butter, tea, beer and in Basingstoke, lots of healthy VEGETABLES.

Christmas dinner was provided unless you had been fighting. By the way, the live-in staff ate the same food - but maybe the best bits went to them...

Pictures of Basingstoke workhouse showed it to be several storeys high. Privies were small toilets in sheds outside the house. In 1871 Basingstoke had 177 inmates, 34% under 14 years, 23% were over 60 and there were some physically and mentally disabled. Those who went out to work were mostly servants or agricultural labourers. Remember, people went to and from the workhouse continually and stayed in them especially during the winter months of January to March.

Did the workhouse work? A bit. In Basingstoke it was the largest single consumer in the local economy, especially of food and coffins! The workhouse system was the forerunner of Local Government Social Services.

In 1913 workhouses became Poor Law institutions - only a cosmetic make-over. Attitudes were changing and improving, but they lingered until 1948, then most workhouses were demolished, became hospitals or even luxury flats. Basingstoke workhouse stood empty: unloved and vandalised, so it was demolished in 1977.

In the 21St century, some consider it to be 'cool' to be work-shy and looked after by the State. In 21St century Britain one has choices and that's thanks to the Brits of yesteryear.... and people like Barbara who enlighten us on a taboo subject.

Thank you Barbara for your comprehensive talk.

Rosemary Bond

Visit to the Bank of England

We had more than enough interest to meet the minimum number of people, but due to recent refurbishment work at the Bank there is a waiting list for visits and it would have been difficult to go before the summer holiday period. We will now try and arrange a visit in the Autumn.

We will retain the original list of names and add yours if you are interested. Please let Carol or Richard know.

An opportunity to get your hands and knees dirty at Basing House

There will be fresh excavation work at Basing House from 21 July –16 August
The excavation will focus on:

New House (based on last year's geophysics)

Area of the newly discovered fireplace (in the Old House)

Continuing work on 2013 excavation area

Monday to Saturday (6 day week) Drop in (no minimum commitment)

Contact Nicole Beale nicole.beale@soton.ac.uk tel: 07956077995

Or find more information at <http://basinghouseproject.org>

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

A special exhibition - LEGO ® Lost World Zoo to 27 Apr.

Willis Museum - The museum is running an ever changing series of special exhibitions in the Sainsbury Gallery., including:

Paul Kidby Discworld and Beyond, Saturday 05 Apr to Saturday 28 Jun. Paul is best known as the illustrator for Terry Pratchett's Discworld books. He is also holding Adult Master classes and family workshops in Illustration during April and June. For details contact the museum on 08456035635.

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

March 20: **John Arlott**: his centenary, by Tim Arlott

Many people remember John Arlott, internationally famous as a cricket commentator, and his unforgettable Hampshire brogue, "the voice of summer". He was also a great collector of books and of wine. His son will help us celebrate the centenary of John's birth.

What's on? (continued).

Basingstoke Archaeological & History Society (7.30 at Church Cottage)

10th April A place of refuge? Basingstoke Union Workhouse by Barbara Large, *Another chance to hear last month's TADS talk!*

'Winchester: 'Archaeology and Memory' Conference

Saturday 26th and Sunday 27th April 2014 at the University of Winchester. A major conference organised by Winchester Excavations Committee, Winchester College and the University of Winchester. It will include a talk on the search for King Alfred.

Further information from: admin@winchesterstudies.org.uk

Tadley WEA Day School: Herschel and the Golden Age of Observers - The history and science of Astronomy before 1900.

Saturday 29th March at the Ambrose Allen Centre, Tadley.

For further details please contact: Jan Smith 0118 983 2251

jancsmith@btopenworld.com

(There are plenty of places on this one day course, so please contact Jan asap if you are interested.)

Some things you might not know about World War 1.

We all tend to think of the war in terms of the muddy Western Front, but there was much more.

Britain declared war on 4th August 1914, but the first shots were actually fired at the Serbian capital Belgrade by the Austrian Army on 29th July in revenge for the killing of the Austrian Arch Duke Ferdinand.

The French invaded German territory (Alsace) a week before the Germans reached France through Belgium. Bloodily repulsed, it was a disaster for the French.

The August 1914 British Expeditionary Force (BEF) soldiers were all regulars. Volunteers did not reach the front until much later.

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