



**July 2014**

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

**Next meeting - Wednesday 16th July 2014  
at St. Paul's Church Hall, 8.00 to 9.30pm**

# **‘Codebreaker Bletchley Park’**

**By John Davis**

*(Everybody welcome - visitors £2.50)*

## **Committee news**

Help is required with the refreshments at the WW1 Exhibition on 27th September.

Thanks go to Jo Stanley for putting up the posters for the last year. She is now moving away, so a replacement is once again needed. Offers to Richard please.

Bank of England Visit on 16th Sept. Plenty of places available. Please contact Carol if you are interested.

*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*

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## **TADS Meeting 17th September 2014**

### **‘Medieval Southampton’**

By Jack Wilson

#### **TADS last meeting - 18th June:**

#### **‘Living with Jane Austen’, (1775 – 1817).**

by local author and 'gardener ', Richard Tanner.

A new one for us. Richard slipped back about 250 years into the character and possible rural voice of the Austen family gardener. Richard only lives a mile from Jane's Steventon birthplace so he's steeped in the very fabric and ambience of 'Austen-ism'.

Jane was one of 8 children (a handicapped brother didn't live with them) of the genteely poor Rev. George Austen and his wife, Cassandra. They were helped financially by George's rich cousin. George had the degree and Cassandra had 'class', the 'gardener' said!

There was a rich rival family in the village of Steventon; the grain-selling Digweed family who lived in Steventon Old Manor House. The Digweeds and Austens were not the best of pals....

Jane's Dad's church at Steventon was Norman, quite small and painted white. It has half of an ancient Saxon cross in the churchyard and a very, very ancient yew tree, reputedly as old as Jesus! The lanes around Steventon are still charmingly rural and Jane must have drawn inspiration from this Regency rural-ness as she walked them, to Deane and Ashe and other villages beyond. Jane is something of an enigma – no-one knows for sure what she looked like (perhaps only one surviving painting), although she was deemed to be 'pretty and popular' gentle and helpful.

She moved in refined circles in our part of northern Hampshire, allegedly dancing in Basingstoke's Assembly Rooms behind the Angel Inn, later living in Chawton near Alton, visiting Bath, London and Southampton and welcomed at all the big houses: Oakley Hall, Dummer, Deane House etc. She and her siblings were cultured. One Mme. Le Froy's nephew fell in love with

young Jane, but he had no money and she was the 6<sup>th</sup> child of a poor rector.  
So **no** marriage!

One of Jane's brothers, Edward Austen, became heir to a man called Thomas Knight. Thomas owned much of Southampton and Chawton AND had a big estate in Kent, so was obviously extremely rich. To inherit this pile, Edward became Edward KNIGHT....

It was he who gave Jane and her mother and two sisters, the now world-famous house in Chawton where she wrote, or improved on, some of her 6 great novels: 'Sense and Sensibility' 1811; 'Pride and Prejudice' 1813; 'Mansfield Park' 1814; Emma' 1816; and 'Northanger Abbey' and 'Persuasion' which were published posthumously in 1818. The books encompass the lives of the well-bred rural middle classes of Regency England. They usually feature the quest of young women for suitable husbands! Jane is remembered for these masterly books with a sniff of satire and the merest mention of a moral tale.....

She lived in her Chawton house, once a large roadside ale house, until the grim reaper came with fatal illness. Jane died in Winchester. The Chawton house is beautifully kept today and very atmospheric, and one can see and sense Jane's presence there.....

Jane's favourite brother, Henry, a banker, had had her books published at a time when many women writers had male pseudonyms. Two of Jane's brothers became Royal Navy Admirals – which was a remarkable feat for the Austens, or any other family.

'Gardener' Richard had obviously researched Jane's story carefully and there's no doubt her work is gently romantic when read or filmed in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century unlike many modern stories which are quite violently frightening or banal.

So, thanks to our 'Ancient Gardener', Richard, who 'seeth all and knoweth all....' (apologies to Coleridge's Ancient Mariner!) and who now retreats into Regency England.....

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](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)

There are no special events until 'The Soldier's Tale' starting on 5th August.

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

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

July 17: The Morris Singer Foundry, by David Vallance. This will be an opportunity to learn the history of this famous company, and hear what happens "behind the scenes" from this talk by David, who is currently Consultant to the Foundry. An exhibition on the foundry by The Friends will be on view at this time in the Basingstoke Gallery.

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

Nothing listed for July or August

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**Derek Ward** - St Mary's Church, Tadley was very full for Derek's funeral with TADS well represented.

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## **History in the Making**

**Street lighting** - The major works programme to upgrade the street lighting of Tadley and district has been completed. We now well provided with new lighting columns topped by high efficiency white lights.

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