



September 2014

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

**Next meeting - Wednesday 17th September 2014
at St. Paul's Church Hall, 8.00 to 9.30pm**

‘Medieval Southampton’

By Jack Wilson

(Everybody welcome - visitors £2.50)

Committee news

David Bowman who has been arranging the Speaker Programme for the last few years has resigned due to the conflicting requirements of life and his job. Somehow we will get a programme together for next year but ideally we need a replacement for Dave. All offers to Carol please. (Tel. Number below).

Our thanks go to Dave for the good work he has done. We have had some very good speakers during his tenure.

*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 15th October 2014

‘The English Pub’

By Phil Wood

TADS last meeting - 16th July:

The Codebreakers of Bletchley Park

presentation by **John Davis.**

Could you feel the tension or sense the spoofs, spies and subterfuge as John spoke? Perhaps he'd have made a good codebreaker

In and after WW2 the codebreakers NEVER TOLD anyone what they did. Some siblings and parents saw their pale, wan, drabness and assumed they were shirkers. It's said that codebreakers, who often were experiencing nervous exhaustion, had to be wizard at crosswords, chess or maths, or be a good linguist. Or some or all of those things

Mystifyingly, war still continues in its bloody brutality, even into the 21st century.

The slightly musty, fusty red-brick Bletchley Park mansion, looking half-derelict then, as now, and secreted in 55 acres of parkland, can truly be said to have had 10,000 17 years-old plus, nerdy brainboxes working 24/7 in 3 shifts. According to Winston Churchill (1874-1965) and American Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882-1945), the Bletchley people shortened the war by at least 2 years. This was in spite of the 'Superior Master Race' who probably thought the Brits. (and some other allied nationalities) were such non-entity nerds and peasants who wouldn't have a clue about code-breaking

And where? Station X is the code name for Bletchley Park and it's approximately 50 miles NW of London and on, or near, main lines of communication at Milton Keynes, Bucks. As well as the mansion, there were the now-famous huts, which were built with extra strong bomb blast walls for protection. They were cold in winter and hot in the summer.

Churchill was very worried about German U-boats which travelled at 30 knots and wreaked havoc on our shipping, while our shipping moved at 7 knots. AND the Nazis were shipping enriched uranium to Japan. So we had to stop all this. We had to decode their enigma machines.

John had experience of visiting Christmas Island in the Pacific and with hands-over-eyes was aware of how brightly the skies lit up with A-bomb testing: no one knew then just how dangerous in the long term being near test sites was.

The biscuit-tin sized Enigma machines cost the equivalent of £40,000 in today's money. These machines fitted easily into the confined spaces of a German U-boat, but the army, railways, Gestapo etc. etc. all had Enigma rotor machines. Hitler and the Germans had no idea we knew of their movements before they moved! And we were careful not to disillusion them. The codes were first 'rumbled' in January 1940, and ever after, though constantly changed.

Bletchley was home to this amazingly eclectic cast of characters playing out extraordinary stories. Civilians such as Alan Turing, who invented the Bombe, an electro-mechanical machine of clattering code wheels that greatly reduced the time required to break the daily-changing Enigma keys. Turing was very eccentric and wore his gas mask to ward off hay fever and chained his enamel coffee mug to a radiator so no one else should use/steal it!

(Dr) Tommy Flowers a bright young telephone engineer who, with Turing and Max Newman, was credited as father of the modern computer.

These civilians, many of them women, dowdy and unglamorous, rubbed shoulders with Wrens and military men; and everyone kept Schtumm. Some Schtumm for ever and not just the thirty years required! Parliamentarian Roy Jenkins was a very good crypt analyst as was Baroness Trumpington.

By 1942, Bletchley was receiving 7,000 scratchy, squeaky messages per day, fed to the 'boffins' by male and female dispatch riders, from radio receivers round the coasts of Britain.

The Brits. and Allies mainly intercepted and decrypted German radio messages, while the Americans concentrated on the Japanese part of the war. Messages were destroyed immediately afterwards. The Germans could ask their sources for a re-send of coded messages but they had to be re-encoded. Some Germans were tired and therefore careless and took short cuts – so the lives of the 'boffins' here were made easier.

The eclectic mix of Bletchley people, together with the rarified atmosphere and great sense of importance of the work, was quite an experience for the young recruits. However, the pressure was immense and Churchill had encouraged rounders and tennis matches, and rest and recuperation at camps where there were armed guards for the young people.

At the end of the war Dr. Tommy Flowers was ordered to destroy our colossus decoding machine so that the remaining bits were 'no bigger than a clenched fist', but happily enough pieces were secreted away for later re-building.

In the 21st century German tourists visiting Bletchley have remarked that they are GLAD we de-cyphered their codes before the Americans A-bombed them, as they did the Japanese!

Thank you John, for your swift, action-packed delivery, as fast as the colossus wheels clacking or and energetic pond dipper dipping and diving into a stream of bubbling Bourbon on the Rocks! (Courtesy of a comment on the voice of the late Elaine Stritch)..

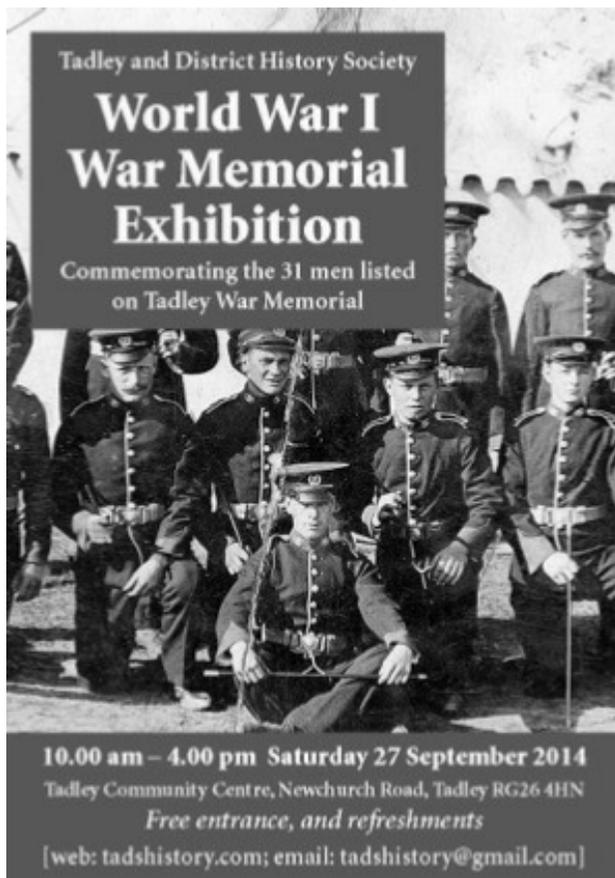
Rosemary Bond

Bank of England Visit on 16th Sept.

A final reminder to those who are going that it is only a few days away. Please be at the Bank in order to meet at 13:45 at the museum entrance in Bartholomew Lane for the presentation at 14:00. We must all go in to this together.

There are plenty of places available. If you are free to come please contact Carol if you are interested.

To those going Carol sent out a full set of instructions by email in July. If you need them again please contact me (Richard).



Just two weeks to go to the the World War 1 Memorial Exhibition at the Community Centre on 27th September. We, specifically Valerie, could do with some help on the day with the refreshments. An hour or two would be a great help.

This is the biggest event TADS has ever put on so please try and come along if you possibly can. Bring your friends and neighbours.

The exhibition covers far more than just the men on the memorial, and will have contributions by local schools and other organisations. I can assure you it will be very interesting and well worth seeing. If you are not able to make it, the information panels are to be displayed in the library by turn over the next few weeks.

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

Now on **'The Soldier's Tale'**. A WW1 family experience

7:00pm Tuesday 14 Oct 2014 **Railways of the Great War** - Talk by Rob Langham. £5 per person. To book your place please call 01256 477766.

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

2:30pm Tuesday 07 Oct 2014 **You Can Draw!** @ The Willis Museum.
A 10 week introduction to drawing suitable for all stages of artist - the complete beginner or the more experienced. We will try different media and use different sources of inspiration to get you going- By the end of the course you'll be looking at everything in a new way!

Led by artist Ronnie Ireland. 2.30pm - 4.30pm (no class 28 October) Fees
£95 / £71.25 / £47.50 To book your place please call 01256 465902

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

September 18: **The Arts and Crafts Movement**, by Hazel Ball

Basingstoke Archaeological & History Society (7.30 at Church Cottage)

9th October. **The Frome hoard**, third century Britain and the Emperor Carausius. By Dr Sam Moorhead – British Museum

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