



December 2014

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

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

‘TADS AGM & Social’

Minutes of the last AGM

Annual reports

Treasurer's report and annual accounts

2014 Programme

Election of Committee

Any other business

We need a Quorum of 20 people minimum, so please come if you can.

Two additional committee members are urgently needed.

Subscriptions are being recommended to remain at £12.00. They can be paid on the evening by cash or cheque in an addressed envelope, please. (Envelopes will be available).

Drinks will be served but the Committee would welcome donations of food and help with the domestic work..

*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 21st January 2015
‘Going shopping with Victorians ’
By Tony King

TADS last meeting - 19th November:

Dickens at Christmas
by Vera Hughes and David Weller.

Social History through theatre for real: the whispering of silk dresses of the lady and the stark, black suit of the man, amid the tinkling bone china teacups and aspidistra-type fronds of the Victorian parlour. Modern thespians, Vera and David, appeared bewigged and in ever-changing character before us. We were surprisingly transported back roughly 170 years to the era of Queen Victoria and Charles Dickens (1812-1870).

Dickens was a great English novelist, but soon internationally famous, of Chatham (Kent) and Portsmouth. He was a bit of a lad.... However, he was one of the first writers to leave you gasping for more – a 'serial' writer. He wrote with raw realism and blunted humour, drawing on many of his own ghastly boyhood experiences.

During Queen Victoria's reign (1839-1901), particularly the early part, we Brits became more aware of the decorative side of Christ's birth: Christmas cards and the new-fangled Penny Post, ice, snow, mistletoe, and the German Prince Albert's introduction of Christmas trees. 21st Century Christmas is still often depicted with crinolines, robins and blazing log fires.

With Vera and David we experienced Dickens coming to life through his characters. Mr. Pickwick (1836) kisses the old lady under the mistletoe and appears without his gaiters to join the dance. Pip meets Magwitch on the Kent marshes (1860). We are reminded of the terrible conditions of the workhouse when Oliver Twist (1837) asks for more, sadly epitomised by Andover's notorious workhouse poem 'Christmas Day in the Workhouse' by George R. Sims where the poorest of the poor penniless paupers are watched by the magnanimous, patronising, warmly-dressed rich.

Christmas would be incomplete without 'A Christmas Carol' and the four ghosts – Marley's spirit and the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future. My several-times Great Aunt, Miss Emma Bown, of Arundel and Portsmouth, was an acquaintance of Mr. & Mrs. Charles Dickens. I have inherited a fold-up letter (pre-envelopes) with a pre-stamp mark and broken sealing wax seal, from the Dickens' time in Portsmouth, circa 1840. Charles Dickens conjured up a whole gamut of emotions, such was his skill: of happiness, love, murder, jealousy, class, elections, money, illness and death.

Vera and Davd, you skilfully portrayed every nuance, and thank you for our excitingly seamless slide into the spirit of Christmas, 2014!

Rosemary Bond.

The actors' website: www.chesterhouse.net



The actors - David and Vera

*Photos by Derek Heath
(Who got told off for taking them, so I had
to use them)*

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*

Father Christmas will be paying a flying visit to Milestones Museum on 13, 14, 20 & 21 December, See last month's newsletter for details.

Willis Museum - The museum is running an ever changing series of special exhibitions in the Sainsbury Gallery. *For information tel 0845 603 5635 or see <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/willis-museum.htm>*

Saturday, 20th Dec. Christmas Creations @ The Willis Museum
Drop-in throughout the day to make your own Christmas decoration.

Friends of the Willis Museum *(7.30pm at the museum - booking essential for non-members. Book through the museum telephone number above)*

18th Dec - Christmas quizzes and plate party for members

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

8th Jan. Excavations at Selbourne Priory, Hampshire by David Baker

*The Committee wish everyone a Happy
Christmas and a prosperous New Year*

**TADS annual membership is £12 per person.
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