



**November 2015**

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

**Next meeting - Wednesday 18th November 2015  
at St. Paul's Church Hall, 8.00 to 9.30pm**

## **'The last days of King Charles I'**

*By Alan Turton*

*(Everybody welcome - visitors £2.50)*

### **WWI & WWII Exhibition**

Last year's exhibition with the addition of information on the six men of WWII named on the Tadley War Memorial and displays on WWII Tadley and Aldermaston Airfield was displayed in St Paul's Church and Hall over Remembrance Weekend. It can now be seen in Tadley Library.

*Comments, queries and suggestions to Richard Brown (0118) 9700100,  
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**[www.tadshistory.com](http://www.tadshistory.com)**

**TADS Meeting 16th December 2015**  
**‘Annual General Meeting & social evening’**

**TADS Meeting 21st October 2015**

**Major Ralph Henry Sneyd of Heckfield**  
By Keith Haines

*Keith came all the way from Northern Ireland to tell us the story of Ralph Sneyd. (Keith is the brother of ‘Valerie of the Committee’, so fortunately travel costs did not apply).*

This was a tale of an Irishman, extended and interlinked families, derring-do in India, elephants used as military tanks, death and disease, the “Fishing Fleet”, and much, much more. That Keith packed it all into one hour was something of a miracle.

Ralph Sneyd was the eldest son of a County Wicklow clergyman, the Rev. Wettenhall Sneyd, who later moved to the Isle of Wight. At the age of 16 in 1800 he joined the Bengal Cavalry, part of the East India Company’s private army, as a cadet. The following year he sailed to India, the voyage taking 4 months. (A sailing ship and no Suez Canal).

Within 4 months of arriving in India he was fighting with the 1<sup>st</sup> Native Cavalry in the Second Maratha War in the rank of Cornet. He remained with the regiment and was promoted to Lieutenant in 1805.

He had 3 years furlough (leave) in England (1814-17) and married Jane Dunbar in London just before returning to India with her and their infant daughter. They had a further 6 children while in India. At that time India was not a good place to live, many nasty diseases were prevalent and a lot of Europeans were killed by the climate alone.

Now back in India his career progressed, with promotion to Captain in 1819 and he became Commandant of the Governor-General’s Body Guard. 1824-25 was spent participating in the Burma Campaign which caused 20,000 casualties, 3% died in battle and 45% of disease. After the campaign and return to Calcutta, Ralph sent his wife and four surviving children back to England – an eighth child was born on the voyage.

Then Sneyd accompanied the Governor-General, Lord Amherst, on a tour of the Upper Provinces of India as far as Delhi. This was a time for displaying the power and wealth of both the British and the Indian Kings with processions of soldiers and decorated elephants, and much feasting. This tour took about 6 months.

Sneyd then returned to England in 1827 and retired from the Army of the East India Company in the rank of Major in 1829 at the age of 45 years.

The family settled at Mattingly Lodge in Mattingly, Hampshire not far from Tadley, hence the local interest. He died aged 56 in 1840, only three weeks after his clergyman father (88), and was buried at Heckfield. Undoubtedly his service in India had taken its toll on his health, but as Keith said, it did not stop Jane having another 4 children after he returned to England! Of their 12 children, 9 survived into adulthood and made good careers or marriages. Eight of them returned to India for at least part of their lives.

As for the 'Fishing Fleet', this was a derogatory term applied to the young women who sailed out to India to look for husbands having had no luck in Britain or Ireland. *If you want to know more about them, there is a well recommended book:*

*'The Fishing Fleet: Husband-Hunting in the Raj' by Anne de Courcy.*

Thank you Keith for your tales of vastly different times when India was a far off and mystical place only for the brave.

Richard Brown

*Keith had prepared a booklet about all the families involved which was distributed to those attending his talk. Free copies are still available from Valerie (Tel 9815774). What I have covered above is only a part of the story. Keith's research into these families is quite epic.*

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## **A TADS Calendar**

After a gap of a few years, TADS has revived the tradition of producing a calendar. It features colour and black and white photos taken by Barry Howard who grew-up in Tadley during the 1960s and 1970s but moved away after leaving school. Many of the photos show places which either no longer exist or that have changed out of all recognition. The calendar, costing £8.00, will be on sale from Profile Print & Copy and Tadley Library.

## ***What's on? Events which may be of interest***

**Milestones Museum.** For coming events: Tel. 01256 477766 or see: [www3.hants.gov.uk](http://www3.hants.gov.uk) & search for - milestones museum

Traditional Hampshire Mummers play at Milestones Museum. Performances will take place on Victoria Place inside the museum at 12 noon and 3pm on 19, 20, 22, 23 and 27 - 31 Dec. plus 2 and 3 Jan. The play is included in the normal admission tickets for Milestones.

**Willis Museum** - The museum is running an ever changing series of special exhibitions in the Sainsbury Gallery. The Museum also hold workshops on assorted topics. *For information tel 0845 603 5635 or see <http://hampshireculturaltrust.org.uk/venue-events/52>*

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

19th November . Darwin's Apprentice - the personal archaeology collection of Sir John Lubbock, by Dr Janet Owen, author and executive officer of Hampshire Cultural Trust.

17th December - Quizzes and Members' Christmas buffet

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

10th December -Christmas Social.

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### **Pat Skidmore**

I was very sorry to learn of the recent death of Pat who was a member of TADS for many years, but had not been to meetings for a long time due to advancing years. Pat was descended from the reformer Elizabeth Fry.

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