



May 2016

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

**Next meeting - Wednesday 18th May 2016
at St. Paul's Church Hall, 8.00 to 9.30pm**

'The Benedictine Way of Life'

By Reg Fletcher

(Everybody welcome - visitors £2.50)

Committee Notes:

Please note that the talk for the September meeting will be: **The London Underground** given by Tony King. This change was needed because the scheduled talk by Alan Turton was given in January when the speaker was unable to come that day.

*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 June 2016
‘The Birth of the English Parish Church’
By Dr Francis Hurd

TADS Meeting 20th April 2016

The Great Exhibition of 1851
By Rosina Brandham

Some of us remember The Festival of Britain in 1951. Prince Albert 'did' the 1851 show? Not so. It was a PR stunt by Queen Victoria to enhance Albert's 'German foreigner' popularity. The Times newspaper thought the Exhibition would 'promote famine and other diseases....'

Rosina knew EVERYTHING about the Great Exhibition, as if she were there for it. This formidable, erudite and elegant lady had her finger on everyone's pulse!

The logistics of the Exhibition were **less** challenging than a 21st century project. When the aristocracy etc. made up their minds to accept the tender of a young, 'common', head gardener from Chatsworth House, Derbyshire – one Joseph Paxton, progress went forth at a rate of knots.

Rosina's love of gardening led her to gardener, Joseph Paxton, and so on to the Great Exhibition.

Originally four dandy-ish Royal Society of Arts chaps: Henry Cole, F. Fuller, C. Wentworth-Dilk and Matthew Digby, tendered for the 1851 project.

However, they procrastinated pitifully. And at first Prince Albert thought 'industrial' matters were beneath him. Aided amply by Queen Victoria, who wanted her husband (in her bed) but out of her hair, he acquiesced. Where to hold the Exhibition? As of now nimbyism (not in my backyard) reigned supreme. Most London sites were rejected out of hand, but eventually Rotten Row, a horsey paradise, was chosen because the building would only be there one year.....and then the horse would reign again! So, 19-football pitches i.e. 19 acres were to be used.

Joseph Paxton hatched the plan for a glass and iron construction, easily-assembled (and later dismantled) which the self-taught railway enthusiast gardener knew would work – he'd made one at Chatsworth: the Lily House.

The British public liked the idea of Paxton's Crystal Palace, and so when it was OK'd on 31st July, 1850, it had to be ready to open on 1st May 1851. And not an indemnity clause in sight.....

Paxton's design went ahead very quickly and the parts for the pre-fabricated building were manufactured in the Derby area and sent by train to London. The builders constructed from the **middle** outwards, and all work went swimmingly well. The 'Paxton Gutter' removed rainwater from the roof and channelled it straight to the River Thames. The maximum size of each flat pane of glass was 4'' (10 cm) by 12'' (30.5 cm). These dimensions are open to opinion and were possibly larger. The public was so interested in the Crystal Palace construction that 5/- (25p)-a-look was charged. Poor people peeped through specially made holes in the fence! The money went to the ominous-sounding Accident Fund. At this time TPOs (Tree Preservation Orders) were introduced to prevent the felling of the elms in Rotten Row.

How to keep the public entranced and there? - The idea of refreshments came. It was a NO COOKING ZONE but you **stood** to eat your buns or ice cream and cold drinks (provided by SCHWEPPEs) so men were not tempted to stroke ladies' legs! All furniture in the one to two-storeyed Palace was wooden.

Behaviour was good during the Exhibition as only 25 pick-pockets were apprehended by the 50 police on duty at any one time. 'Men enjoyed looking' at the near-nude statues – in the days when a piano's wooden legs were, supposedly, covered up!

Eventually ladies were allowed to sit down in the Crystal Palace, but there was a big problem with the lavatories – how does one get one's crinoline and hoops through the door? Anyway, port-a-loos were provided so one had to 'spend a penny' to enter them.....

As safety glass hadn't been invented, turnstiles were provided to promote crowd control. Nightly, the iron and wood galleries were cleaned, and rubbish removed, by automatic brushes. Thus the fire hazard was lessened.

Manufactured exhibits for the show came from Europe, our then-Colonies, U.S.A., England, etc. but the Russian stuff disappeared en-route.... How was everything transported? Pickfords obliged and became very prosperous. Still are.

Day and weekly train excursions evolved. The railways and Thomas Cook Travel benefitted greatly. Hotels did well. It is alleged that one 84 year old lady walked all the way to London from Cornwall....

Entrance fees were keen: 3 guineas (£3.15) for 3 days; or £1/day or 5/- (25p) or 1/- (5p) for Saturdays because Paxton wanted all to be able to enjoy the Crystal Palace. It was shut on Sundays.

When 1st May 1851 arrived everyone said the glittering glass and iron Crystal Palace was spectacular.

Magnanimously, Prince Albert provided free beer for the 2,000 workmen, but it amounted only to one pint each, and was paid for by the organisers.....

A mean-spirited man, one Col. Sibthorpe, tried to wreck the Palace by marching soldiers nearby. No effect. All Londoners were thrilled and the Queen's popularity soared dramatically because of this fairytale 'Crystal' construction. The Exhibition was deemed a huge success with 109,000 plus punters there on the 1/- day tickets. 9,000,000 people visited. £16,000,000 was raised in today's money.

The building was cooled by calico material dampened by water. A stunning crystal glass fountain was installed and was the subject of an early photograph. Rogers of Sheffield displayed a large Swiss Army-type knife sculpture with 80 blades and instruments. It's said country people were identified because they walked round wide-eyed and open-mouthed in wonder; and often wore their best smocks..... A strange 'parrot-cage' exhibited the uncut, yellow Koh-i-Noor diamond given to Queen Victoria (recently disputed ownership, 2016, by now resolved in Britain's favour).

The Great Exhibition closed on 15th October 1851 at 6 pm, after five and a half months, but the public wanted it to remain. It had raised lots of money and this went towards buying land for building the Kensington museums and the V & A Museum.

Happily, Paxton became Sir Joseph and lived a fulfilled life back at Chatsworth in the Peak District, dying at 65 years old.

The poor old Crystal Palace sat there for 2 years, then was dismantled and a new Crystal Palace was built in south London. Second chances don't always work out and sadly it burnt down for unknown reasons, in 1936.

Some TADS members said they or their forebears, could remember this sad happening. Anyway it melted like a snowman because of the glass and iron.

Rosina, your talk was fantastic. Thank you so much, to you and your able assistant.

Rosemary Bond.

Alfred “Alf” Rolfe 11 August 1933 – 28 April 2016 (Age 82)

Alf was a member of TADS for many years, coming to meetings latterly with his partner Beryl Sandford.

His local knowledge and contacts were invaluable to the TADS Project Group when compiling the two Millennium publications: Around Tadley Fact and Fable and Around Tadley People and Places.

Alf was born in West Street, Tadley to Alfred and Ivy Rolfe. He was a true “TAD”, able to trace his Tadley family connections to the 1600's. On leaving school, aged 15, he became an apprentice engineer at Thornycrofts, Basingstoke, later becoming a draughtsman at Lansing Bagnell, until its closure. In his spare time, like many Tadley men, he played in the local band.

He suffered a near fatal crash as a young man and underwent plastic surgery at the pioneering unit (Rooksdown) in Park Prewitt Hospital, where he was told that he would never walk unaided. As we know he proved then wrong.

Alf remained a Tadley man except for a short period when he completed his National Service in Scotland. He met his Yorkshire born wife, Kathy, while on holiday in the Isle of Wight. They married in 1962 and had two children: David and Alison.

All things engineering were his passion, in particular motorcycles, later scooters, and trains. He travelled to many parts of the world just to ride a steam train! He was of course a member of the Thorneycroft Society.

He was a member of The Royal British Legion for 60 years and had the honour to be a Standard bearer at the Royal Albert Hall, Service of Remembrance on more than one occasion.

Carol Stevens

I have been encouraged to put this in by the Committee:

London to Paris Cycling Challenge 20 -24 July: I am doing this event to raise money for the small national charity Remap. It is going to be a real challenge at the age of 73. It is 295 miles in 4 days with no rest days!

I have been a volunteer engineer with Remap for 17 years. We design and make bespoke equipment to enable disabled people to do things they cannot otherwise do, not only everyday living tasks but also sports and hobbies. As a charity we never charge for the things we make, so fundraising is vital.

I will be collecting at Wednesday's meeting or you can donate on-line at www.justgiving.com/Richard-Brown73

The Editor

What's on? Events which may be of interest

Milestones Museum. For coming events: Tel. 01256 477766 or see:
<http://hampshireculturaltrust.org.uk/milestones-museum>

Guided tours of the Victorian galleries at Milestones Museum. Join our costumed interpreter for a stroll around the streets of Milestones and hear amusing, lively tales of the challenges of daily life, Victorian style. The tours are included in your museum admission tickets. The tour starts at 2.30pm and lasts 30 mins. Tours take place on Fridays 3, 10 and 17 June 2016.

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>*

Of note are two events next month celebrating the life of 'Capability' Brown the Landscape Gardener. They are from 11-23rd and 18-27th June.

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

19th May - 'From Waterloo to WWI - The life of the ordinary soldier' by Ian Williams. *This is a change from the previously advertised programme.*

Basingstoke Archaeological & History Society (7.30 at Church Cottage)

9th June - 'The Great Wellington Statue' by Paul Vickers of Aldershot Military Museum.

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