



**February 2017**

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

**Next meeting - Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2017  
at St. Paul's Church Hall, 8.00 to 9.30pm**

***'Tree rings - a  
time and place'***

***By Andy Moir***

*(Everybody welcome - Visitors £3.00)*

**Committee News**

A experiment is going to be tried of asking members to wear name badges at meetings, so that we can get to know who people are and you can get to know us. Surprisingly, even after several years you don't necessarily learn people's names but fudge a way round it if talking to them.

*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*

**[www.tadshistory.com](http://www.tadshistory.com)**

**TADS Meeting 15<sup>th</sup> March 2017**  
**‘ History minus the boring bits’**  
*by Susan Howe*

**TADS Meeting 18<sup>th</sup> January 2017**

**Gilbert White the Gardener**  
by David Standing,  
Head Gardener at the Wakes, Selborne, Hants.

Capability Brown he is not.... garden too small.... but what an enthusiastic and knowledgeable guy is David. He works in Gilbert White's 30 acre garden, being part gardener and plantsman, natural historian and historian, archaeologist, detective and lecturer, etc.

Selborne, 25 miles S.E. Of Tadley, is quintessentially a microcosm of 18<sup>th</sup> Century Olde England, still with a rich variety of life that surrounds us and on which we should depend. It's unspoilt and breathtakingly beautiful with a colourwash of mellow old cottages and their cottage gardens containing a rich palette of old-fashioned flower varieties.

Gilbert White (1720-1793) was born in Selborne Rectory, over the street from The Wakes where he moved aged 10 years. He remained there till his death. Gilbert wasn't rich but comfortably off because of his richer London publisher brother. He lived a relaxed life as the bachelor Curate of Selborne, as well as being one of the first organised British naturalists and gardeners, and writing his world-famous book 'The Natural History of Selborne'.

David said Gilbert didn't actually 'DO' gardening. With gardeners' wages at 1/- (5p) a day in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> Century he had men in.

So far, David's years at The Wakes have resulted in many discoveries. He has traced and preserved 2 wood-pile ha-has. (Ha-ha, 18<sup>th</sup> Century French, wall or fence placed in a ditch, separating land in a large garden so as not to interrupt the views). The soil dug from the ha-has had made The Mound, topped with a wooden barrel from Oporto, formerly containing port wine but now made into a seat! David has kept Gilbert's Zig-Zag (literally) path to the Hanger clear and maintained. (Hangers = wooded steep-sides hills, a feature of Downland countryside).

Gilbert had a curious expression: 'borrowing dung' – he had the farmer bring the pungent stuff to his garden and used it as a barricade to 'heat' said dung to 40 deg. C to keep his melon, etc. plants warm. The matured dung was then collected again by the farmer.... We know these things because Gilbert kept fastidious gardening and weather notes (later brewing notes also) in his Kalender. He did this for 40 years. David studied this Kalender and we all wondered why bachelor Gilbert grew 600 cabbages annually! The villagers thought of Gilbert as an eccentric – he also took over some of their gardens as well....

The infamous 1987, 'what – storm? - no storm – BAD – storm' wreaked havoc with a swathe of Southern English countryside, and wrecked many of Gilbert's plants and trees.

When he was strapped for cash brother Ben stepped in but he sometimes could only afford a wooden urn, obelisk or Hercules statue, etc. Your 18<sup>th</sup> Century status was magnified with a wooden gate – he had a set of 6 made which were his 'happiness of a lifetime' ..... Funnily enough David said his Kalender/diary showed Gilbert spent hundreds of pounds on meat!

Gilbert had a fruit wall constructed and grew nectarines, peaches etc; 30 types of apple; medlars; quince; plums; 30 types of pear; and much else from skirrit (edible) gold-laced polyanthus, to sweet rocket, hollyhock, every species of scented and Damask roses and Ramblers, tulip trees taking 20 years to flower; Holm oaks, Cedars of Lebanon, 9 -12 foot (1 m to 4 m) Gibraltarian Reeds; foxgloves; rusty foxgloves, and much, much, much more.

He even had a tortoise called Timothy, later renamed Timothina..... There are no authentic pictures of Gilbert White but - there are many artistically-licenced ones, showing Selborne Church placed all over the place, but there's one picture David longs to see: a watercolour in the Houghton Library next to Harvard, U.S.A.

David really has worked a labour of love to root out the quirky splendour of one of our greatest naturalists and gardeners. Thank you so much, David, for your enthralling tales of Gilbert the Gardener.

Rosemary Bond.

N.B. The Wakes also shares its building with the story of Captain Oates, of Scott of the Antarctic fame, 1911. He of "I am just going outside, I may be some time." fame.

[www.gilbertwhiteshouse.org.uk](http://www.gilbertwhiteshouse.org.uk)

## ***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>

7 Feb – 23 April '**Around the World Brick Adventure**' - Stop the plot to steal the Crown Jewels in our live action LEGO® challenge

**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 01256 465902 or see*  
<http://hampshireculturaltrust.org.uk/venue-events/52>

21 Jan to 1 Mar - **International Garden Photographer of the Year** - the winning photographs

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

16th March - **A Saunter through the Stuarts** by Diana White

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

9th March - 'Jane Austen's Houses' by Derek Spruce – Local historian

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**Annual Subscriptions of £17 per person** are now overdue. If you have not yet paid and are paying at the February meeting will you please put your cheque (preferred) or cash in an envelope bearing your name (envelopes will be available at the meeting) .

This will help the Treasurer recognise who has paid and get the receipts prepared.

Will new members please give details, including Phone No. and email address. Subs may also be sent via Carol (See bottom of Page 4 for address.)

*So far 45 people have paid, 80% of last year's membership.*

***TADS annual membership is £17 per person.  
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