



June 2018

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

**Next meeting - Wednesday 20th June 2018
at St. Paul's Church Hall, 8.00 to 9.30pm**

‘The AA Man’

(A theatrical production)

**by Vera Hughes
& David Weller**

(Everybody welcome - Visitors £3.00)

New TADS Book: The title for the new book will be ‘In grateful Remembrance - Tadley War Memorial’. The launch has been set for Saturday 3rd November at 2.30pm in the Ambrose Allen Centre, Tadley.

*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 18th July 2018
‘Brunel and the Great Western Railway
by Lionel Williams

TADS Meeting 16th May 2018

The Nabobs of Berkshire.
by Clive Williams OBE

What's a 'Nabob'? A 'man', in the Urdu language. In the 17th, 18th and 19th Centuries the nabobs were remarkable chaps from England, who were the slightly-impooverished younger sons of gentry, without proper prospects. Incidentally, the diminutives of 'Nabob' are the non-complimentary words: 'snob' or 'nob'

The Nabobs' desire for wealth made them ruthless. To achieve this wealth they joined the East India Company (E.I.C.) which was originally set up in 1600 to get spices from the Spice Islands (now Molucca, Indonesia). India then was very rich and populous (50 million people) and England was relatively impoverished (with only 5 million population).

As well as spices, the E.I.C. traded in opium, tea, diamonds, silver – plundered from the Spanish! - fine silks, and pottery, etc. Obviously we couldn't export our wool to the steamy, Indian sub-continent.....

The E.I.C. ships were well-equipped, with 70 + guns and an incentive to keep the crews on the straight-and-narrow by letting the captain and officers have a quarter of the hold spaces!

India before air-conditioning was rather grim. You lived or died. Usually 'for 2 monsoons....' If alive, you quickly returned to England before accident, illness or violence claimed you. You bought up houses, estates or parliamentary seats.

The England you'd left didn't like you a lot – with your strange 'foreign' habits, language and diet, so you mostly associated with your fellow ex-Nabobs and many of you nouveau-riches acquired goodies in Berkshire: known as the 'English Hindoostan.' It was conveniently close to London, which many other counties were not.

Some of Berkshire's 35 names of Nabobs are very surprising: Gen. Richard Smith (1734-1803), Chilton Lodge, Hungerford, who often gambled in a London Club at 3,000 guineas a throw i.e. £300,000 today. His Dad had been a humble cheesemonger, so the General was sensitive about cheese.

The first Richard Benyon bought Gidea Park in Essex and then Englefield House and estate, 9 miles from Tadley. Warren Hastings had Purley Hall near Reading. J.C. Bamford of JCB (machinery) fame bought Hastings' property and restored it. There was much intrigue in India at the time of the E.I.C. We quarrelled with just about every other European country which was Empire-building. The Dutch gave us New Amsterdam (New York). Samuel Pepys said a bag of nutmegs cost a bag of gold..... From the Portuguese we had Singapore and Hong Kong – still 2 of the world's greatest money and trading centres in the 21st Century.

No white women were allowed at the E.I.C. trading centres – so predictably a lot of Anglo-Indian children were born. The Mogul Emperors were Moslems, sometimes with 80 wives therefore maybe 200 children....

Lord (Robert) Clive of India (1725-74) was a charismatic but tricky character who fought in the Battle of Plassey (1757) and beat the ruler of Bengal. Many prisoners were put in the infamous Black Hole of Calcutta and suffocated while their guards drank and caroused.

Any Nabob who was a threat to the E.I.C. was killed. The Duke of Wellington's predecessors were involved and Gen. Mornington and his brother – later the Duke – learnt to fight in India.

When the E.I.C. ceased trading in 1858, Britain had become the leading World Power and many Indians believe that it was at India's expense.

Some Berkshire Nabobs involved in India once were the Ballasis family from Upper Basildon; Francis Sykes of Basildon Park. He built the Palladian-style house in 1760, whose contents were sold in 1929 to the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York.

Disraeli had some involvement, as had William Pitt (1640) who bought Swallowfield Hall, Reading and also sold the Indian Pitt Diamond to the French Dauphin for £13 million.

Aldermaston Court was owned by General Burr; Donnington Grove, Newbury - John Bebb; Denford Park, Hungerford - the Cherry family.

Luckily most of the descendants of these decadent, 'naughty' Nabobs have settled down into quieter upper-class pursuits of huntin', shootin', fishin' and managing their estates and are no longer associated with the Hooray Henrys of yore.

They, who plotted intrigue, skulduggery, thuggery and sharp practice of every sort, treating the Indians badly and like slaves, calmed down. Maybe they did bleed India dry of its varied wealth?

Thank you, Clive, for your detailed and marvellous talk.

Rosemary Bond.

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>

Willis Museum - The museum is running an ever changing series of special exhibitions in the Sainsbury Gallery. The Museum also holds workshops on assorted topics. *For information tel. 01256 465902 or see*
<http://hampshireculturaltrust.org.uk/venue-events/52>

25 Apr to 7 Jul. '*I Do!*' Wedding dresses over 250 years.

Friends of the Willis Museum (7.30 pm at the museum - Non-members £2,
booking essential through the museum telephone number 01256 465902)

19th July - The First 40 years of the **Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust** by Bill Fergie

Basingstoke Archaeological & History Society (7.30 at Church Cottage)

No Information.

Basingstoke Discovery Centre (aka The Library)

23rd June, 10am - 4.30pm. **Local and Family History Event.** *Free entry*

There will be several local organisations on hand to offer tips and advice on a range of local and family history subjects.

TADS Website

The website is currently unavailable. There have been a lot of obstacles to overcome in moving it to another hosting server. "A steep learning curve" says Ian. It is hoped to have the work completed soon.

***TADS annual membership is £18 per person.
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