

## AROUND TADLEY

### Pamber Forest Wildlife Reserve

Chase birds and butterflies around this ancient woodland on the outskirts of Tadley. Open all year round with free entry. Tel. 01489 774400

### Tadley Treacle Fair

Enjoy craft fairs, fairground rides, vintage vehicles and hog roasts at this fantastic annual event. Sunday, June 5, 2011  
Visit [www.loddonvalleylions.org](http://www.loddonvalleylions.org)

### Silchester Roman City Walls and Ampitheatre

What remains of the once Roman town of Calleva Atrebatum, a rare sight in Britain and definitely worth a visit. Open all year round during daylight hours with free entry. Tel. 01483 252000

### The Vyne

A fascinating tudor mansion which has been changed and renovated over the years providing a slice of historic trends and fashions. Visit [www.nationaltrust.org](http://www.nationaltrust.org) for opening times. Tel. 01256 883858

## GETTING THERE

Situated in the north of the county, Tadley can be found on the A340 north of Basingstoke. Coming from the south, leave the M3 at Junction 6 and get onto the A339 until you see signs for A340 and drive through Sherborne St John, which is just four miles from Tadley. Sat nav code for town centre: RG26 3JE



# A sticky story

From treacle mines to magical brooms, Tadley has it all, Liz Barnett looks in to the history of this fascinating town



St Peter's Church is on the original site of the town. Photos kindly supplied by Tadley and District History Society

Blanketed by beautiful countryside and lying on the border between Berkshire and Hampshire is the rural town of Tadley. Up until the 1950's it was a peaceful hamlet with a scattering of village dwellings, but since the arrival of the Atomic Weapons Establishment in nearby Aldermaston it has developed in to a bustling hive of residential activity and has fast become 'the place to live' for commuters looking for tranquillity away from the cities.

Its complex past makes it a favourite among historians and one ancient custom in particular brings visitors from all over the country. For centuries Tadley has been the centre of the besom broom industry or witches

broom as it is often known and is so famous that all of the brooms in the fourth Harry Potter film, *The Goblet of Fire* were made in the town by the Nash Family, who have been making brooms for over 300 years.

### What's in a name?

The town of Tadley is said to have started life as a clearing in the dense forest that, at one time, would have covered most of southern England.

There are references to several different spellings of its name including Taddenleage, Tederlei, Titherley, Tuderley and Tadel; but Tadde, meaning 'Toad' in old English and Ley meaning a 'clearing in a wood' pays reference to its origins and

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it is this name that has stuck. Records show that in 909 Edward the Elder granted the 'manor of Overton' to the Bishop of Winchester and there are several indications of there being a wood at Tadley in the grant papers.

It's only in recent years that Tadley has been given township status and it's believed that the first village would have originally been located near to where St Peter's Church stands today.

The village remained in this position throughout the 17th century until Lord of the Manor of what was originally named Tadley and later named Wyford, Henry Ludlow decided to pull down 12 cottages and the villagers dispersed.

Many settled around the nearby Pamber Woods and with the congregation of St Peter's now lying to the north east of its original site, a new church, St Saviours was built. One of the oldest buildings in the village today is Burrells Farm; it dates back to the 15th century and is now a small holding breeding traditional and rare farm animals.

### Show me the money

Or should that be treacle? You can't beat a bit of good old British banter and the story of the treacle mines is one that has been told across the country for centuries, often ending in the teller waiting in anticipation to see if his or her's chosen target is going to take the bait and reward them with a gullible expression. Alas, treacle has never nor will it ever be found in the ground; so what then was the cause of this age old prank?

There are several explanations floating around, most of which the people of Tadley probably mulled over themselves. There are said to have been a little fewer than 50 mines scattered across the country, of which Tadley was included, each using their own myths and legends to explain the term.

In Tadley's case there seems to be two clear theories as to what the

Treacle Mines could be referring to, one of which tells the story of a 20th century gardener who is said to have unearthed a treacle tin full of money.

Folklore says that money was stored in the tins, as the banks could not be trusted, and buried around the village to keep it safe. Burglars caught on to this and would dig for the tins, hence the term treacle mining.

The other more plausible theory is that the name actually refers to the heavy clay soil found in the area which, when wet, has the same appearance of treacle. It doesn't matter to the people of Tadley how the rumours started, to them it serves as a great excuse to celebrate their town

There are said to have been a little fewer than 50 treacle mines scattered across the country, including Tadley

and come together as a community to attend the annual treacle fair organised by the Loddon Valley Lions Club, a charitable group of volunteers affiliated to the wider recognised Lions Club International.

### Cake anyone?

Peek behind the scenes of any village or town in Hampshire and you're guaranteed to find that the beating heart lies within the many clubs and societies so lovingly supported by its residents; it's an excellent and timeless way to unify a community and Tadley is certainly no different.

Tadley and District History Society, or TADS for short, was formed back in 1984 at St Paul's church hall and has since gone on to publish and re-publish several commendable reports, books and pamphlets including *Around Tadley, Fact and Fable* and *Around Tadley, People and Places*. The town has such a rich history, especially when you look at its considerable migration from its original village dwellings near to St Pauls, and you can see why there is an abundance of residents who remain so fascinated by its past.

Carol Stevens is one such resident that has been a member of TADS for some 17 years and now proudly holds the title of chairperson of the society and its project group which was established in 1999, she says: "Although we all are very interested in the history of the town, we also enjoy and are lucky enough to host talks from all walks of historical life. Recently we invited Major Stephen Grinstead who is the Director of Heritage at the Salvation Army to come and share his knowledge with us for which we had a vast turn out.

"The residents of Tadley are always given the opportunity to be involved in any events that we put on and we are greatly supported by those that have watched the town develop over the years." Carol and the other members are constantly updating

the history of the town and have invested time and money in to researching old photographs and finds to help piece together a picture of how their ancestors would have lived in the town before them. Carol says: "For some time now the project group and I have been trying to invite Time Team to St Pauls to see if we can uncover the site of the original village, we have just taken some aerial shots and are hoping they can entice the team over to join us.

It would be fantastic to finally have some hard evidence behind the rumours and second guessing and it could be a very exciting time for the town."

**Opposite page, top left:** The Hook Eagle Morris Men entertained visitors to last year's Treacle Fair. **Top right:** St Peter's Church.

**Middle:** The community all comes together each year to celebrate the flourishing treacle mines in the town. **Bottom left:**

Unfortunately the Fighting Cocks pub in Main Road is no longer there but, in 2008, it was the centre of controversy when its sign was branded obscene by the borough council. Following a protest by the town council, residents and the local history society it was agreed the sign would remain at the new development to be built. **Bottom right:** Daring stunts at the annual Treacle Fair