



February 2011

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

**Next meeting - Wednesday 16th February 2011
at St. Paul's Church Hall, 8.00 to 9.30 pm**

The story of the Town Crier

By Brian Sylvester,

Newbury's Town Crier

(Everybody welcome - visitors £2.50)

Annual Subscriptions of £12 per person are now due.

If you are paying at the next meeting will you please put your cheque or cash in an envelope bearing your address (a second hand one will do). This will help the Treasurer recognise who has paid and get the receipts prepared.

New members please give details, including Phone No. and email address.

Subs may also be sent to our PO Box. (See bottom of Page 4.)

If you are one of the 50+ members who have already paid, thank you.

*Comments, queries and suggestions to Richard Brown (0118) 9700100,
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www.tadshistory.com

TADS Meeting 16th March 2011:
Computers and Tea - Lyons Electronic Office
By Quintin Gee

Last Meeting 19/1/2011

The Humble Brick by Alan Pritchard

For "Mud, glorious mud" read 'bricks, glorious bricks'. Maybe it's a boy-thing: I've only seen female brickies in Russia!

Alan is a fanatical, dedicated hands-on brickie-turned lecturer who's been respectfully fondling bricks since boyhood. "Bricks are BEAUTIFUL", he said, and compared the red brick with its frog (for mortar) even more favourably than with a lady....

As there's lots of clay in the South of England, especially the Thames Valley and even the Tadley area, small clay pits were dotted around all over. Most are long gone, leaving the massive brick works e.g L.B.C. (London Brick Company) in Luton, with revolving brick kilns the size of 2 football pitches.... Brick colour can depend on oxides in the clay, the firing temperature, the skill of the brick maker, etc. 'Green' bricks are left unfired and would have been used for a harvest display as 'fruits of the soil'.

Bricks are a symbol of solidity and reliability: hard as a brick; to drop a brick; bang your head on a brick wall, etc.

Bricks have been around for millennia. 10,000 years ago, or more, when man decided against a nomadic existence and opted for static dwellings, bricks were considered more durable than twigs, leaves and straw - as in "The Three Little Pigs" story. Not to mention "The Yellow Brick Road." Bricks began as sun dried mud (adobe) which still features in USA's Wild West Cowboy country, and other places worldwide. Of course, the Romans were famous for their lime, clay and volcanic ash brick work, and as they were an Occupying Force here, we Brits tore it all down when they left in 410 AD, be it barracks, villas or roads. What we didn't wreck, our weather did!

Alan said if you saw a fiver in the road, you'd look. Not so for a lone brick, be it large or small, various in hue, simple or ornate - specialist bricks can retail at £17 each. Bricks are beautiful, durable, improve with age, and if having an extension built, you can 'antique' your bricks with a cowpat wash.... Building site disputes have always abounded, be it Mesopotamia (Iraq) or Manchester, over methods of manufacture, language and brick-dropping. Very severe penalties for that.

Post Rome, we lost the skill to make bricks until the 14th century, although they were made in the Low Countries. Our merchants investigated, favourably, and so our Government slapped on a BRICK TAX!

Itinerant brick makers often dug the clay on-site, tempering it for a year and then building a cellar where the clay had been. Clever. Brick-makers were paid per brick - 'piece work' and could make 1,500 bricks per day.

The Tudors made wonderfully decorative bricks; and in the 17th century, the Great Fire of London created a demand for something less combustible than wattle and daub. Guilds made certain the work was kept for members.

In 1625, Charles I suggested standardising brick sizes; and the Victorians decided red brick was 'vulgar' and rendered it. However, there are still wonderful Victorian houses. Dickens' book "Bleak House" depicts 7-10 year old children carrying clay.

So, love your bricks as Alan does. They're better than concrete, steel or glass. He recommends brick-watching when in a traffic jam. Photograph them. Cherish them.

Thank you Alan, for your tangible enthusiasm and your life-long love affair with the brick.

Rosemary Bond.

Bursledon Brickworks

If your enthusiasm for bricks has been fired by the talk and write-up, why not visit Bursledon Brickworks industrial museum. The museum is easy to reach via the M3 and M27 east, and is at Coal Park Lane, Swanwick, Southampton. SO31 7 GW. Open on Thursdays 10am to 4pm.

They also have major open days, the first this year is the Spring Steam Up and Country Fair on Sunday 17th April.

What's On? Events which may be of interest.

Hampshire Record Office

For Information see www3.hants.gov.uk/whatson-hro or ring 01962846154.

Milestones Museum

National Science and Engineering week - 11:00am Saturday 12 Mar 2011

The theme of National Science and Engineering week this year is communication. Visitors can have a go at communicating using Morse Code, semaphore, tin can telephones and phonetic alphabet.

Willis Museum

The museum is running several special exhibitions at the moment including during half term.

Friends of the Willis Museum *(7.30pm at the Museum)*

17th Feb. Tales of the unexpected – from the Willis, by John Hollands.

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

10th March: The archaeological evidence for the Saxons in Hampshire

Dr Nick Stoodley, University of Winchester

Silchester - 21st march. Professor Mike Fulford will be giving his annual talk on the 'Silchester Roman Town' at 7.30pm at the Village Hall. £3 for Adults and £1 for Juniors.

Tadley Library will be displaying our own 'Historic Walk through Tadley - parts 1 & 2' as a follow up to Project News 16 & 17, from Feb. 14th to March 5th.

Newsletter Distribution

David Bowman, who is already on the Committee in various roles, has taken on the distribution in area 2 as a result of the appeal in the January Newsletter.

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