



March 2007

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

**Next meeting - Wednesday 21st March  
at St. Paul's Church Hall, 8.00 to 9.30 pm**

**'Basingstoke Heritage Society'**

Debbie Reavell,

Basingstoke Heritage Society Secretary

*(Everybody welcome - visitors £2.00)*

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

## **TADS Meeting 19th April 2007:**

### **‘The Gurkhas’**

Major Davies, Curator of the Gurkha Museum

## **Last month’s meeting (21/2/07)**

### **Land’s End to John O’Groats by Bicycle**

by Bryan and Christine Watson

What is local history? It may be as local as needs be. Bryan and Christine are local, cyclists and Christian fund-raisers and they were surrounded by history, nature and the milk of human kindness as they cycled ‘End-to-End’ in 2006’s buttercup sunlight summer.

Travelling by rail to the West, they then cycled with adequate but the minimum of equipment, always making sure their sports clothing was padded at the appropriate pressure points...

To cycle 1055 miles in 19 days is going some. Some days it was 50-60 miles, sometimes 70, once 76 miles in a day.

Christine and Bryan left the rocky splendour of Land’s End and cycled to Truro, with its magnificent cathedral and paintings, and across the moulded, grey, hilly moor-land of Cornwall into the daintier cow parsley and stitchwort fringed lanes of Devon. One county down. Lots to go! Onwards and upwards and over the Severn Bridge cycle path, along to Tintern Abbey always keeping to their pre-booked bed and breakfast schedule and not

mind too much how dishevelled and wind blown they appeared. After all, they would never see the people en route again!

Cycling through Ludlow (Shropshire), where Roger Montgomery, Earl of Shrewsbury, built his massive red sandstone castle and keep in 1085 and which Norman, Plantagenet and Lancastrian kings and princes developed, destroyed and rebuilt again and again, Christine and Bryan also travelled along Tudor and Jacobean streets with their sturdy, box-framed black and white houses. The cyclists must have been jolted back to reality to see a gaudy pink and yellow life-sized World Cup football mascot outside a town teashop.

Iron Bridge, on the River Severn, pleased the pair. It's one of the major centres of Britain's Industrial Revolution and Abraham Darby's 200 foot long bridge, built in 1779, is still used by pedestrians. It marked the first use of iron in bridge building. Travelling through England's Lake District, whose landscape is somewhat near to Christine's home area, they found a time warp of little grey towns, crusty mountains and snake-like lakes: of Wordsworth, Sir Walter Scott, Charles Lamb, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Beatrix Potter and Alfred Wainwright, etc., Christine and Bryan saw traditionally brightly-painted Romany caravans. The occupants were travelling from the famous Appleby Horse Fair. Our cyclists saw only the M6 as a distant horror, but suffered a £100 worth of broken bike gears instead on the rural road. Happily the repairman didn't charge our charity pair for labour, so the milk of human kindness flowed on...

Apparently many soft-adventure cyclists go FROM Cornwall because the prevailing S.W. wind is on your back.

It must recalibrate the senses to travel near the backbone of England and over the border into the magnificent and brooding Scots mountains and low lands. As Christine said, the Scots make good use of transport opportunities in river valleys, so cycling can be unexpected fun. Less hilly than Cornwall, perhaps? If no one knows you, why not sit on a wet Edinburgh pavement? Or eat haggis, neeps and tatties al fresco in Langholme?

For once the John O' Groats' (allegedly named after a Dutchman) seas were not rolling, jolting or squirming, but calm and peaceful in their frame of rocks, cliffs and coves. The only thistle in the pink thrift-dotted grass was a short-fused Scottish landlady! The countryside up here in the North is wild and unspoilt with stone circles and prehistoric remains. Vast tracts are uninhabited since the early C19 Highland Clearances. Of course, the Dounreay Atomic Reactor was on this North Coast.

Bryan and Christine had their photograph taken at John O'Groats, living proof of their feat, and over £1500 richer for their charity. They then caught the train South from Wick and returned from their remorseless, remote, realm of extremes to the reality of our area again.

Thank you Bryan and Christine for the tenacity and time you devote to adventuring for the benefit of others.

N.B. Christine and Bryan also did 5 weeks' charity work on a mission hospital's buildings in Zambia, August 2006.

Rosemary Bond

## **A TADS Outing to Chartwell on Wed 25th April.**

The cost will be £9 to £10 for travel by mini-bus. Pay your own entrance. (Chartwell is a National Trust property). Maximum of 16 people, minimum 8. Book your seat on Wednesday evening or ring David Day on 9700909. (NB This was originally advertised as going to Wisley Gardens as well, but it has been decided it would be too much for one day.)

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## **What's On? Local events which may be of interest.**

**Hampshire Record Office** (*'Last Thursday' Lectures 1.15-1.45pm*)

Thursday 29 March - The Forlorn Hope: sources for military history in local record offices (part 2) by Heather Needham

**B'stoke Archaeological & Historical Society** (*7.30pm in Church Cottage*)

12th April - Kiplin Hall: a Jacobean house and its families  
by Dawn Webster

**Willis Museum exhibitions:**

5th to 31st March - Lewis Wyatt: The Basingstoke Town Hall's Architect

1st March to 21st April - Fountains of Light -The science and history of fireworks.

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

19th April - Hackwood Park, the Sale of the Century by Brian Spicer

**Hendon RAF Museum** - Countywide Travel are running a day trip to the museum on Sat. 31st March. Cost £16.50 or less. They are picking up from Tadley. Tel. Basingstoke Information Centre on 0800 028 0888 to book.

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## **History in the Making**

Baughurst - 3rd March. Houses in the area around Wellington Crescent were evacuated on Saturday evening after explosives were found in a house there. A 24 year old man is helping police with their enquiries.

*TADS annual membership is £10 per person.  
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