



November 2016

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

**Next meeting - Wednesday 16th November 2016
at St. Paul's Church Hall, 8.00 to 9.30pm**

'The Death of King Rufus'

By Gordon Lewis

Committee Notes:

After asking for views from members the Committee has decided that the annual membership fee will rise to £17 and the Visitors' fee to £3 for the coming year. They had been held at the old rate for several years while the expense of the Hall Hire and speakers has risen considerably during that time, so we have been making a loss on the Meetings.

The Treasurer will be pleased to accept payments at the coming meeting.

*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 21st December 2016 'Annual General Meeting and Social evening'

TADS Meeting 19th October 2016

Samuel Saunders of Saunders-Roe: from boats to flying boats. by Mike Hurst.

Samuel, 1857-1933Sam the Man', was possibly the Richard Branson of his day and the 'Brunel of the River'.

An innovator, Victorian engineer, hob-nobber with royalty; multi-tasker; inventor of all things floating and flying; crazy about patenting his stuff, he was born in the Swan pub on the Thames at Streatley, Berks, and probably had river water then sea-water, instead of blood!

Sam was massively ambitious and thought outside the box. He found time to be a Church Warden, sidesman and did the electrics in the Church. He had a bloodline heritage of boatbuilding and lock-keeping, eventually graduating to a marine life at East Cowes on the Isle of Wight, and he lived at Whippingham, not far from royal Osborne House. He loved SPEED.

All of this and more was gleefully relayed to us by Mike, a microbiologist and leading light in discovering Sam the Man and preserving Sam's plethora of tangible inventions and intangible ideas. Mike obtained a blue plaque for Sam's birthplace at Streatley's Swan pub.

Sam had a boathouse/workshop complete with (remaining) slipway into the Thames. He built punts, punt poles, boats of all shapes and sizes, imported Canadian canoes and constructed a university barge for University College London. He hired-out boats and built 'The Flying Dutchman' when he was only 19. He also built a bullion-transporter boat. Sam made a beautiful

home, 'Willowside' by the Thames for his wife, Kate, and son and daughter. He had a grand showroom there, which remains – as a Royal Mail Sorting Office. The Goring Regatta was partly his idea and he encouraged the 1892 Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race, delighting in the boating-boom of the age.

Sam also built a sail-punt and then his own birch bark canoes. The boating etiquette of 1899 was that the lowly wore flat caps and the toffs, toppers (top hats)!

His brilliant daughter had an idea which he developed: the Consuta boat, made of plywood and 'sewn' together with wire. It was light, strong, waterproof, had a quiet steam engine and shallow draught leaving minimum wake. It was used for Boat Race work as an escort launch till the 1960s. In 2000 Consuta was restored to steam power from a petrol engine. Obviously Sam had patented it in 1899, possibly encouraged by the then Duke of Edinburgh.

By 1901, Sam had leanings towards SALT water and moved to the Isle of Wight's east bank of the Medina River at Cowes. He had ship yards in Genoa, Kiel and Paris (on the R. Seine). In 1904 he raced the German Kaiser at Kiel and was not modest at beating him with his 27 knot speed boat....

Then he embraced aviation: flying boats, as well as sea-going yachts, dinghies, lifeboats, plus car bodies and prefab houses and he ran the IoW Pottery! What energy.

In 1910 he built a gondola for the American airship, 'Akron'. It was difficult because of the inflammability of the hydrogen gas. Sadly in 1912 all 4 of the 'Akron's' crew were killed in the USA, because pilot, Vamman, expanded the gas too quickly. He'd been showing off, Mike said. Also in 1912, Sam built a Bat Boat for Tommy Sopwith, of Sopwith Camel fame.

During 1915-16, Sam constructed 80 'Short' flying boats for the war effort.

He was popular on the IoW and very good to all his employees. His next business partner was Alliot Verdon Roe –A V Roe, who was 'grumpy and indifferent....' but between them they founded Saunders-Roe (SARO) in 1929, as an off shoot of AVRO (1910-1967) which became part of Westland in 1964, and manufactured fixed-wing sea-planes with hulls and floats able to land on river or salt water.

Sam's legacy (he died in 1933), along with Roe was fast marine boats, flying boats, SRN Hovercrafts 1, 2 and 3; sports equipment, buses and space rockets. Quite versatile!

SARO built 'Cloud' in 1930 and also made Malcolm Cambell's 'Bluebird' boat K3, of plywood with a Rolls-Royce engine, in 1937. Many were saddened that the advent of America's Boeing 707 aircraft made the flying boats nearly redundant. The company continued to manufacture the SARO 'Skeeter' helicopter until 1957 and the Hovercraft SRN 4, 1967. Hovercraft still ply regularly from Southsea, Hampshire to Ryde. On the IoW, the successor company GKN continues to thrive.

Books have featured Sam and his marvellous inventions and there's a Saunders Way in E.Cowes with a mural about super Sam on their Waitrose shop! Sam is buried at Whippingham near the royals.

Back in Berkshire, a new village sign features the 'Consuta' boat – but fibreglass has replaced the Consuta technique....

And yet, and yet.... Sam's legacy isn't upheld by any of his descendants in the 21st Century. His brilliant daughter died young. His son, Hubert, may politely be described as disinterested in things sailing or flying; and some of his relations died of alcohol-related diseases, Mike said. Happily, Tony Hobbs of Hobbs' Boating has picked up some of the pieces, especially on the River Thames.

Mike was so enthusiastic and knowledgeable and we thank him very much, AND what joy, he said TADS' members may visit the Thames in 2017 and go out in the Consuta replica boat!

Thanks Mike,

Rosemary Bond

Events at the Basingstoke Discovery Centre

Tuesday 15 November / 2pm / £5 **‘Hampshire's True Crimes’**

John Eddleston is the author of some 23 books on true crime and this presentation will give the gruesome details on just a few: a murder without a body, the Southampton Garage Murder and some which involved the most unusual weapons. A must for all crime fans!

Tuesday 29 November / 2pm / £6 **‘Murder, Sex & Mayhem in the English Church’**

John Vigar has appeared on television and radio on many occasions to share his expertise and passion for the stories behind the architecture. Once you've heard about all the whippings, beatings, stabbings and murders depicted all around you - a quiet stroll around the local church will never be quite the same!

Thursday 17 November / 10am - 2pm / £24 **‘Christmas Felt Workshop’**

Mix and match pieces of woollen fleece to create your own piece of felt which can then be shaped and embellished into unique bunting and hanging decorations.

All materials and tools are provided and included in the ticket price.

Wednesday 30 November / 1pm - 3.30pm / £15 **‘Paper Craft Workshop’**

One of our best selling courses: Pauline Barnfather is back to lead you through various techniques and tools to create some stunning cards, tags and gift boxes.

All materials and tools are provided and included in the ticket price.

Booking is essential - Please contact The Discovery Centre on:

01256 478670

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>

There will be a traditional Father Christmas Grotto each weekend in December.

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>

Alice in Wonderland - A touring exhibition from the British Library, Alice in Wonderland draws together an astonishing array of material from the original manuscript to computer games. However, the undoubted star of the show is a very special object - Alice's real-life looking glass.

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

17th November - 'The Military at the time of Jane Austen' by Alan Turton

Basingstoke Archaeological & History Society (7.30 at Church Cottage)

8th December - 'The history and practice of Morris dancing' The Redding Morreys (Christmas Social)

Tadley WEA course - The Art of Photography

Tutor: Sandra Smith Start: Friday, January 13th, 2017 for 7 weeks.

Time : 9.45 am – 11.45am

Fee: £57.40

This course will introduce students to the history of photography and its place in culture from its beginnings in the 1840s to the present day.

We would really appreciate it if you could enrol on-line via the WEA website

www.wea.org.uk/southern or telephone Freephone: 0800 328 1060.

***TADS annual membership is £17 per person.
Correspondence to Tadley and District History Society,
c/o 5 Church Road Pamber Heath Tadley. RG26 3DP
Email: tadshistory@goolemail.com***