



**May 2017**

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

**Next meeting - Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2017  
at St. Paul's Church Hall, 8.00 to 9.30pm**

**‘Where is - what is that?  
Curiosities in  
Hampshire’**

***By Jill Daniels***

*(Everybody welcome - Visitors £3.00)*

*Comments, queries and suggestions to Richard Brown (0118) 9700100,  
e-mail: [richard@ilexind.plus.com](mailto:richard@ilexind.plus.com) or Carol Stevens (0118) 9701578*

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

## **TADS Meeting 21<sup>st</sup> June 2017**

### **‘ Padworth House’**

*by David Peacock*

## **TADS Meeting 19<sup>th</sup> April 2017**

### **Englishness – A look at Traditions and how they started.**

By Chris Hutchinson.

One point on which Chris was extremely definite was that 'tradition belongs to people here now, not the ones who were here in the past'.

He began by showing us a photo of the Leeds Morris Dancers. They maintain the tradition, dress as in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, all men, no ladies, but look - one chap with long hair and a bride and bridegroom, the latter couple one tradition which is new.

We would, perhaps be disgusted by what people traditionally put on churches in Medieval times – a nude lady on the west face of York Minster for instance! On one of the circular roof bosses of a church (Chris is one of those people, myself included, who visit churches and cathedrals bearing binoculars) he spied a labyrinth pattern. Norwich Cathedral has had a labyrinth in the cloisters for many centuries, but why? Chris didn't know. There is a wall around the labyrinth – for pleasure, punishment, to escape evil? The devil cannot follow you around a labyrinth.

In the village of Breamore near Salisbury, there is an ancient turf maze where the boys from Winchester College are/were made to walk it as a punishment. At the St. Cross Hospital in Winchester, founded as a charity for the care of old men, there is a tradition of giving bread and ale to travellers who ask, which still continues today. However the traditional silver-rimmed horn cup has been replaced by a plastic cup – a new tradition or just expediency?

*(Hygiene? –Ed)*

Some traditions seem quite weird to modern eyes. In Abbots Ann church in Hampshire Chris showed a photo of a row of ‘Virgins' Crowns’ hanging from a bar quite high up. Nobody really knows how this tradition started but the fact is that if you are born in Abbots Ann and die a virgin you are entitled to have a Virgin’s Crown hanging in the church. In the past coffins stayed in the

church porch for a week and during that time anyone could lay a glove/gauntlet on the coffin if they thought the deceased was not entitled to the crown. They 'threw down the gauntlet' and inside the church it is possible to see a metal 'gauntlet' hanging with some of the crowns. There are names and dates attached to the crowns but they are difficult to read from a distance. Rush bearing is another ancient tradition but found mostly in the North of England, not the South.

Rushes were put on the floors of houses and churches and changed yearly. New rushes were collected in a massive framed lump which was hauled through the surrounding villages by 200 men and then taken up to the church where they were strewn inside. However this tradition died out due to the drinking and fighting which ensued - but was revived in Saddleworth 30 years ago with, hopefully, better results.

Another tradition from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century is the carnival and fair in which a competition for gurning (making weird faces) is still carried on by men, women and children; in the photos the gurning was carried out whilst looking through a horse collar!

Grassmere, Cumberland – a wrestling competition consisted of kicking shins until blood was drawn! (*Shin kicking was also practised at the Fighting Cocks pub in Tadley –Ed*)

Decorating trees is another tradition which appears to be world-wide, not just in England. In Aston and Clun, Shropshire, trees are decorated on 29<sup>th</sup> May, Oak Apple Day, to remember the restoration of Charles II in 1660. Gladstone put a stop to it for a time but nowadays the decorations stay all the year and according to Chris look rather a mess. In Cheshire there is a stained glass window showing a Maypole. In the past these were sparsely decorated and appeared to have engendered lewd and wanton behaviour – so the Puritans stamped out whatever celebrations surrounded them. Maypoles still survive in Ottley in Cheshire and Stukeley outside Birmingham.

Chris showed many photos of the well-known tradition of 'well-dressing' in Hope, Derbyshire, begun originally as thanks for deliverance from the Black Death. In its present form it only dates back to the end of WWII and many flower petals, leaves etc. are used to decorate the 'boards' which stand above the wells.

A fairly local tradition, in Hungerford, is connected with Commoners' Rights and Manorial Rights, and includes a 'court' to sort out rents, a horn being blown at the Town Hall, a Town Crier crying at various points in the town that the court is in session and Tuttimen (Tythe men) carrying tithe poles with

flowers at the top. All these actions survive from the past but participants are not sure of the reasons for them. More modern traditions seem to include ladies locking themselves in upstairs rooms if they cannot pay their rent and Tuttimen climbing ladders to collect a kiss in payment. Now there are also Tuttimaidens (from the local school) who give out oranges.....

In High Wycombe there is a tradition of 'weighing the Mayor' – at the beginning of his year of office and at the end of the year to see how well fed he has been during his time in office. Now we are becoming more inclusive and people who live in the area, older gentlemen, the Vicar, Englishmen or otherwise can be weighed.

Traditions carry on but the people are changing. Traditions belong to the people who are here now, not the people who used to be here!

Ann Broad



The Virgin's Crowns in Abbots Ann Church. The last was awarded in 1973 - Photo from the Abbots Ann village website, which has much more information.

**Sainsbury's Petrol Station** - The planning application to build a small petrol station was passed last month by B&D Council Planning Committee. It is not known when work is likely to start.

Access will be from **Sainsbury's Car Park and not from Silchester Road.**

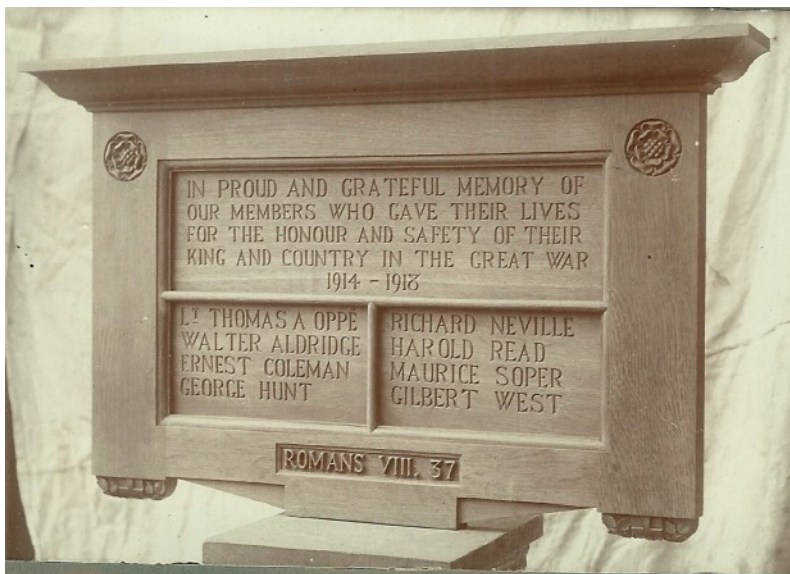
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**Local Policing** - Ministry of Defence Police from the two AWE sites are working with local Hampshire Police to increase to policing of our local communities and around the AWE sites. Last year the project proved successful with a 33% drop in criminal activity. Please report any suspicious activities to the MDP control room on 01189 826 286.

Carol recently found that Tadley Police Station is open at certain times. Most of us thought it was closed. If you need to see them, check before setting off for Basingstoke.

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**A Mystery Plaque** - A group in Silchester who are researching Silchester and World War I have been in touch asking if we know anything about a plaque which commemorates 8 men who died in World War I. They have a photograph (below) but no one knows what club/organisation it relates to or where it was sited. We have established that 7 of the 8 men are named on local war memorials. Any information gratefully received.



## ***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 hold workshops on assorted topics. *For information tel 01256 465902 or see*  
<http://hampshireculturaltrust.org.uk/venue-events/52>

6 May to 19 July Angie Lewin: **A Printmaker's Journey**

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

May 18<sup>th</sup> - **'People on Plinths'** by Tony Cross. The stories behind 12 noteworthy statues in Hampshire.

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

11th May - **'The Ebbsfleet elephant butchery site and the Acheulian invasion of Britain'** by Dr Francis Wenban-Smith – University of Southampton

8th June - **'John the Painter: the first modern terrorist'** by Alan Turton

**Basingstoke Discovery Centre**

13 May at 2pm **'Russia and Europe: What Next?'** A talk by John Pilkington, award winning adventurer from BBC Radio 4.

Tickets are £5, and can be purchased online from the Hantsweb shop, over the phone on 01256 478670 or purchase in person from the Basingstoke Discovery Centre Information Desk in Festival Place.

***TADS annual membership is £17 per person.  
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