



**July 2018**

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

**Next meeting - Wednesday 18th July 2018  
at St. Paul's Church Hall, 8.00 to 9.30pm**

# **‘Brunel and the Great Western Railway’**

**By Lionel Williams**

*(Everybody welcome - Visitors £3.00)*

**Please remember that there is no meeting in August. The next meeting will be on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> September.**

*Comments, queries and suggestions to Richard Brown (0118) 9700100,  
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**[www.tadshistory.com](http://www.tadshistory.com)**

## **TADS Meeting 19<sup>th</sup> September 2018**

### **‘A Grandmother’s Legacy -**

**an insight into five generations of an Anglo-Indian family  
during the British Raj’**

**by Jenny Mallin**

*Please note. This is a change from the advertised programme.*

## **TADS Meeting 20<sup>th</sup> June 2018**

### **The AA Man**

**A Theatrical Production by Vera Hughes & David Weller**

In a return visit to TADS, David and Vera took on the personas of Sir Stenson and Lady Cooke after he had received his knighthood in 1933 for being the first and only Secretary of the Automobile Association (AA).

They looked back at the early development of the AA into an organisation of over 500,000 members in 1933/4.

The AA was formed in 1903 by motorists concerned with the police speed traps which rigorously (and perhaps unfairly) enforced the universal 20mph speed limit. Three policemen calculated the speed of a vehicle along a straight road using a stop watch with a handkerchief waved on the car’s entry and exit of a measured furlong.

Cooke became AA Secretary after being literally plucked of the street in central London. Starting with only 90 members, the AA steadily grew under his guidance.

At first the AA used cyclists to warn motorists of the police speed traps, but a challenge to a case on the Fairmile at Cobham in Surrey in 1905 which they lost saw the AA overdrawn and broke. A fund-raising dinner raised £362 and saved it.

As it grew it needed a telegraphic address, the best available was Fanum, Greek for a sanctuary. It is still used today for the name of its head-quarters in Basingstoke.

By July 1906, after only 3 years, they had grown to 940 members and Cooke began to introduce many of the services for which the AA is still known: agent

garages; free legal defence (at first a solicitor member did it for free ); AA uniforms; yellow village name signs; and in 1912 the famous telephone boxes. Although local calls from the boxes were free to members, nationally the bill was only £2 - £3 per year. A bargain for the publicity obtained. In 1908 they had 5000 members and opened a northern office, later followed by an office and patrols in Scotland. That year also saw a tie up with the Touring Club of France to help members make tours abroad. Naturally the AA then started providing maps and guides, as well as help in shipping cars across the Channel.

Still the AA grew – an amalgamation with one of its rivals brought membership to 28,000 in 1910.

Cooke's ideas still flowed with patrol men (still on bicycles) being trained in First Aid; AA road signs for dangers and information; and a system of AA Stars for hotels and inns awarded after inspection.

In 1914 the membership was 83,000, but the First World War knocked it back. Patrol men were encouraged to join the armed forces and Stenton Cooke served in the Army himself as a Major, based in London where good use was made of his administrative skills.

After the war the AA membership was down by over half, but steadily recovered and then grew and grew. In the 1920s they introduced motorcycles and sidecars for the patrol men which continued until the change to mini-vans in the 1960s.

In 1920, 10 AA petrol filling stations opened. The first was in Aldermaston. Does anybody know why? After all it was not even on the Bath Road. Until then motorists had refuelled from 50 gallon tanks kept in their gardens or with cans bought from chemists. Long journeys must have taken quite a lot of planning!

By the time Stenton Cooke was knighted in 1933 nearly every motorist in the country belonged to the AA. He continued as its secretary until his death in 1942 at the age of 68.

Thank you Vera and David for enjoyably bringing to life the birth and formative years of an organisation which has played a major part in the lives of many British motorists.

Richard Brown

## ***Lots of things to see and do***

### **Silchester Dig**

Reading University will be digging on the Calleva site of the Roman bath-house between 25 June and 22 July with an open day on the 14 July.

### **Baughurst**

**A World War 1 event:** Commemorating the 1918/19 Peace Celebrations. A tea party on 9<sup>th</sup> September at 2pm at Heath End hall with an exhibition, memorabilia, music and songs, tea and cake.

### **Heritage Open Days**

The Heritage Open Days will take place on 6-9 and 13-16 September.

For the first time in its 24-year history, Heritage Open Days – England's largest festival of culture and history – will take place over two consecutive weekends. This year, in recognition of the centenary of the Universal Suffrage Act, there will be hundreds of events taking place on the theme of 'Extraordinary Women' – focusing on both well-known and less celebrated women.

### **Mikron Theatre Company**

Sun 22nd Jul at 3pm Mikron will be performing '**Get Well Soon**' 70 years of the NHS, at The Rowbarge, Station Road, Woolhampton, Reading, RG7 5SH. *(We saw this show on 1st July in Reading Abbey ruins. It was very good - Ed.)*

**Tadley WEA** have announced their Autumn course:

**Great Women Artists – Who are they?** Course Ref: C3742893

Tutor: Sandra Smith Dates: 26<sup>th</sup> October 2018 to 7<sup>th</sup> December 2018

Time: 9.45am to 11.45am Fee: £60.20

Please enrol on-line via the WEA website [www.enrolonline.wea.org.uk](http://www.enrolonline.wea.org.uk) or telephone Freephone: 0300 303 3464.

For further information on these courses or about the branch please contact: Jan Smith (Secretary) [jancsmith@btopenworld.com](mailto:jancsmith@btopenworld.com) 01189832251 or Mary Covers (Treasurer) [MaryCovers@aol.com](mailto:MaryCovers@aol.com) 01189832995



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## ***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>

21 July - 9 Sept. **Mission Mega Machine** - A fantastic science-based exhibition and family activity day out in the streets of Milestones. Learn about inventions and innovations developed in Hampshire.

**Willis Museum** - The museum is running an ever changing series of special exhibitions in the Sainsbury Gallery. The Museum also holds workshops on assorted topics. *For information tel. 01256 465902 or see*  
<http://hampshireculturaltrust.org.uk/venue-events/52>

Now until 4 Aug. **Gathering Memories** project and exhibition.

**Friends of the Willis Museum** (7.30 pm at the museum - Non-members £2,  
*booking essential through the museum telephone number 01256 465902*)

19th July - The First 40 years of the **Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust** by Bill Fergie

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

13th Sept - **Warriors digging warriors** by Richard Osgood of  
Operation Nightingale

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## **TADS Website**

The website is now back online. There is a problem with the 'Publications' link which does not work at the moment and hopefully will soon be cured. Our thanks go to Ian Burn and Neil Forde for all their work.

***TADS annual membership is £18 per person.  
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