



November 2018

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

**Next meeting - Wednesday 21st November 2018
at St. Paul's Church Hall, 8.00 to 9.30pm**

**‘Everyday life in the 18th
Dynasty of Ancient Egypt’
By John Billman**

(This is a different speaker from the one previously advertised)

(Everybody welcome - Visitors £3.00)

Our new book **‘In Grateful Remembrance - Tadley War Memorial’** has been very well received and following the launch afternoon we had it on sale at several events over the WWI Remembrance weekend. Copies will be on sale at the TADS meeting, price £10.

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

TADS Meeting 12th December 2018

‘Annual General Meeting’ to be followed
by a social event.

(NB This is earlier than the date in the programme).

At the AGM the **Committee will be resigning**, fortunately we are all willing to be re-elected. Anybody able to join the Committee will be more than welcome.

Subscriptions are now due with the rate unchanged. Our scrooge of a Treasurer is always willing to take your money.

TADS Meeting 17th October 2018

Spies in Petticoats

By Carol Brown

The title of the talk offered a lot of scope, but Carol’s interest is in the exploits of the women who joined the French ‘F’ Section of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) during World War II. Not spies in the classic sense, but very brave ladies working as undercover agents in an extremely hostile country. Carol’s interest started with Violette Szabo GC who is probably the best known of all of the SOE women, probably because of the 1958 film, ‘Carve her Name with Pride’ starring Virginia Mckenna. She is also remembered by the poem ‘The life that I have’ written for her by Leo Marks as an aide memoire to her transmission codes. Carol has become good friends with Violette’s daughter Tania.

F Section was run from Baker Street in London by Maurice Buckmaster. After selection which was either thorough, through luck, or ‘we will give her a go’, the girls were initially trained at Wanborough Manor, north of the Hog’s Back near Guildford. Then special skills were taught at other places, mainly in Southern England. They all had to speak French like a native, and become skilled as radio operators, in handling code, using arms, in unarmed combat, and much more. Some arrived in France by parachute, others by boat, or by

Lysander aircraft, always by night to a very uncertain reception. In the early days the Resistance in France was very limited and there was always the possibility that it had been penetrated by the Germans.

Churchill was very keen on the SOE and had told them to set Europe ablaze. His enthusiasm was not shared by the Germans who brutally retaliated to acts of resistance and sabotage, not only on those they caught but on nearby French villagers, who may have been entirely innocent. ‘Allo, ‘Allo! it was not. Vera Atkins who was ex-SOE did research after the war and found that 104 people of F Section were killed. She found there were 39 women agents (far more than generally known) of whom 13 were killed, often after prolonged torture and incarceration in concentration camps like Ravensbruck. They needed to be very brave and mentally and physically strong, and they were all volunteers! Their tasks were usually as radio operators, message carriers, and some times organising sabotage and generally liaising with the local French resistance and the ‘Maquis’.

Besides Violette Szabo the two other well-known names are Odette Hallowes (Churchill), more famous for being Churchill’s daughter-in-law than for her exploits said Carol, and Noor Inayat Khan GC who was part Indian and the first woman radio operator to go to France. Noor was betrayed to the Germans by a French agent not long after she arrived in France. After a brutal year in custody, she was executed in Dachau concentration camp.

Other women Carol cited included Simone Moudeller who specialised in sabotage and liaison; Pearl Connelly who ended up leading 3000 Maquis and survived; Virginia Hall who was an American with a hollow wooden leg which was very useful for hiding things, and Nancy Wake an Australian, code named ‘White Mouse’, who was the most decorated of them all. In later life she was thrown out of a Star and Garter home for being too fond of a drink.

All the SOE women were regarded as civilians, so were not eligible for British military medals, hence the award of the two George Crosses, the highest civilian decorations.

Thank you Carol for your very interesting talk and good luck with your research. There is still a lot to learn about these very brave women whose stories need telling.

Richard Brown

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>

6 - 30 Nov - **The Women's War Effort:** The Women of World War One
Discover the vital roles women played in the First World War.

8 - 9 Dec - **Traditional Christmas Market**

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>

6 Oct - 18 Dec '**Marvellous Mechanicals**' An exhibition for all ages, which features modern automata, or mechanical sculptures, with clever mechanisms and often humorous ideas.

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

15 Nov. '**Life at The Vyne after the roof project**' by Hollie Ryan,
Visitor Experience Manager of The Vyne estate.

Basingstoke Archaeological & History Society (7.30 at Church Cottage)

13 Dec. '**On the Ocean**' Prof. Sir Barry Cunliffe – Emeritus Professor,
University of Oxford.

TADS Website. After yet more problems the website is now working.
Following completion of the book, work is starting to remove some of the glitches and make it even better.

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