



**March 2019**

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

**Next meeting - Wednesday 20th March 2019  
at St. Paul's Church Hall, 8.00 to 9.30pm**

## **'The Mysteries of Stonehenge'**

**By Graham Loxton-Best**

*(Everybody welcome - visitors £3.00)*

**Membership fees** - These are now over due. The fee remains at £18 per person. The Treasurer will take cheques or cash at the coming meeting or payment may be sent via Carol Stevens at 5 Church Road, Pamber Heath, RG26 3DP.

*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 17th April 2019

## ‘Major Roller - a Tadley Hero’

By Ian Burn

TADS Meeting 20<sup>th</sup> February 2019

### Coaches and Coachhorns

*Their story from the Golden Age to the Present Day.*

by Colin Pawson, LHH

I hope it's not politically incorrect or 'Me-Too'-ish to say what a presence Colin Pawson has. Whippet-fit, aristocratic in demeanour, obviously equine orientated, a don't-mess-with-me look BUT a twinkle in the eye and an imposing turn of phrase plus ever-so-slightly risqué! And he was strikingly dressed in red 'frock' coat, cravat, beige breeches and topper and long brown boots. In his line of business he probably knows some of the older royalty, but one wouldn't dare ask!

Colin is a talented speaker and tootler of horns, little and large. What was an unusual hobby, he said, is now also a profession. And what an exciting way of life. He's preserving a tradition which is marvellously exhilarating and interesting. Who would believe the type of horn and how it's blown, actually MEANS something like 'Get out of my way my coach and four are coming through....' The horn music became the POP TUNES of the day, when the countryside was silent, apart from birdsong, bulls bellowing, Sunday church bells and coach horns.....

This was Colin's take on 200 plus years of history, galloping and tootling towards us in a most unexpected way. How did one get from A to B in the Good Old Days? With frustration and difficulty, except people didn't know differently then. In museums one sees farm carts with truly enormous wheels – because of the challenging roads.

Then in the 1800s three men revolutionised transport. John McAdam (1756-1836), of 'tarmac' fame; He decided to dress roads with large, medium, then small stones. Hey presto! With the help of navvies we had a solid road surface

which drained itself. Thomas Telford (1757-1834), was a roads-as-we-nearly-know-them-today designer and builder. And then came the third man with a mission: John Palmer. He was a theatre manager in Bath who was irritated by the length of time it took from Bath to London – 3 days. Wow! John managed to get the time down dramatically, maybe because he knew friends in high places: Prime Minister Pitt the Younger, who soon got 'wheels turning'. The journey in August, 1784 now only took 16 hours. Remember it passes just 4 miles north of Tadley: the A4. By 1820 we had wide roads (NOT those often quaintly shown in TV historical costume dramas like Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*).

The taxes collected at toll booths paid for the roads' upkeep. It was 8-12 miles from each coaching inn and fresh horses. Thus we had STAGE coaches..... These worked superbly. The Royal Mail cottoned on, with their coaches' livery being black, burgundy and red plus the Royal monogram. And did they move! Not stopping at the toll gate, the coach guard blew the coach horn and they thundered through, sometimes lifting the mail bag while moving (as did railway trains in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century onwards). Woe betide the tardy toll keeper or pedestrian who'd be run-over by the 1 ton coach and four travelling at 10-12 m.p.h. As these ran nightly at 8 pm onwards, and there were no street lights, you'd be FINED for impeding the mail if the coach stopped.

The A4 Bath Road was one of the first major routes and it still has the famous coaching inns of yesteryear. As has Newbury; but no toll booths remain in our immediate area.

In the 1830s 'The Shrewsbury Wonder' stagecoach travelled with 4 inside passengers plus 3 others outside and if you were a drunken sailor, unfit farmer, or ill, and you fell off -TOUGH.

The rich travelled post-chaise: in a small private coach with 2 horses and 2 people inside and an outrider called a postillion. Colin said the Queen uses these coaches and postillions at Ascot Races.

The uber rich travelled where-ever they wanted in a private chariot e.g. if eloping to Gretna Green, Scotland you'd smartly avoid the bride's angry Dad.....

The rich but frenetic mail coach business was wrecked all too soon by 1840s railway revolution. So, many horses, ostlers, coachmen etc. etc. were made redundant. On the Great North Road, later the A1, the stabling for 1,000 horses became obsolete, although the coaching companies said people on trains would die from travelling at 20 mph.

So the coaches of yesteryear became the rich man's hobby of today. In the 1880s you could hire a Park Drag for a day at the races or travel from London to Brighton in the summer for the new-fangled sea bathing. On July, 13<sup>th</sup> 1888, one James Selby, a professional coachman bet 1,000 guineas (1 guinea = £1.05) he

could travel from London to Brighton and back in 12 hours. He did it in 7 hours 40 minutes with the horses being changed almost as quickly as a Formula 1 racing car wheels: in about 47 seconds. Sadly James expired young, at 44 years old and is interred at Highgate Cemetery, London. It's human nature to challenge. In 1908 friendly, rich Alfred Vanderbilt came over from USA with 2 coaches and 80 horses. Sadly in 1914 his horses were requisitioned for WW1. Speedy lady driver, Sylvia Brocklebank beat the men at their own game at the International Horse Show at Olympia.

Just like famous named railway engines, some coaches had names: 'Vigilant', 'Monarch' etc.

Colin is involved in charity work which takes him all over England as a Road Coach Guard, 'raising the odd glass' as he travels the 20 miles a day at 6 m.p.h. He says it's fun and raises money. Colin plays the brass Post Horn to warn of imminent arrival 'Clear the Road!' The longer brass 5 notes Coach Horn, which he also tootled, sounds 'Get out of my way. I'm overtaking you nearside....' The 7-keyed Key Bugle signifies boredom for the Guard, but he also entertains the passengers with it. Apparently many 20<sup>th</sup> Century and 21<sup>st</sup> Century tunes are adapted from the early and late 1900 Coach Horn Tootlers' music. Any tardy passengers loitering at the Coaching Inn bar could also be flushed out, 'Get ready to pay your bill at the Inn, visit the facilities and fetch your hot water and brandy!'

It was undeniably cold and uncomfortable travelling in and on a coach.

Colin said the 16 inch (41 cm) wooden seats had to be enlarged for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century physique!

But what a wonderful and tuneful gap coaches, horses and coach horns filled pre and post the railway train.

Thank you Colin for your absolutely excellent talk and 'tootle'. It was great fun.

Rosemary Bond.

*Our thanks go to Colin for giving this talk at very short notice - Ed.*



Two pictures of Colin Pawson sounding his horn at our meeting. (*Upper one by Derek Heath*). An activity requiring good lungs.

The following YouTube link shows coaches, including Colin, in action at various shows including Newbury: <https://youtu.be/q4IZYFLT7Ns>

## **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>

Until 28th April '**Bricktropolis** and the Attack of the Mighty Monsters'  
Another excellent Lego event for children.

**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>*

Until 20 Mar '**The Sunday Times Watercolour Competition**' Exhibition.

29 Mar to 12 June '**Elizabeth Blackadder: From the Artist's Studio**'

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

21 Mar '**Alfred the Great**' a talk by Professor Barbara Yorke of Winchester University.

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

11 April '**Mortuary Rites in Early Bronze age Wessex**'  
by Dr Jackie McKinley – Wessex Archaeology

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## **A 1992 Article**

A non-member has asked for help in finding an article from the April 1992 Hampshire Magazine (Vol 32 Page 10) which is called 'Swings and Roundabouts'. The article apparently refers to Tadley and Franklin Avenue.

If you have a copy can you please get in touch with Carol.

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