



April 2020 (email only)

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

Our next meeting - Who knows when it will be?

It will come as no surprise that we have cancelled all meetings for the first half of the year. Whether we will be in a position to resume in the Autumn is a very reasonable question, but without an answer. While the lock-down hopefully may be eased long before then, many of us are by age alone in the 'vulnerable' category and may not be let out until goodness knows when.

Where meetings have been cancelled we are asking the speakers if they will be willing to come next year.

Editorial

I decided that there was no reason that I could not usefully keep the TADS newsletter going by email during the current hiatus. The rest of the committee thought it a good idea. There are things going on in the background which may be of interest and I have found a lot of reports of old TADS meetings which are very interesting and worth republishing. Otherwise it will contain anything that comes to hand.

Richard Brown

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

www.tadshistory.com

Zoom - Many of you will have seen references to this online Conferencing program/app in the press and on TV, etc. Some of you may even have tried it for talking to family and friends. The Committee used it for our scheduled April meeting and in general it was very successful, particularly in lieu of anything other than individual phone calls or emails. All you need is a PC (with camera), tablet or smartphone and it is free. One of the speakers we have had to cancel suggested Zoom as a way of presenting his talk while more than maintaining social distancing. We are certainly ready to give it a go if there is enough interest.

Emails expressing interest to me please - richard@ilexind.plus.com

TADS Meeting 19th September 1990

Basingstoke's House for Fallen Women

by John Fisher

This title conjures up all sorts of ideas and to have one in Basingstoke seems even more unlikely, but at our September meeting Mr. John Fisher gave a very interesting account of just such a place.

The house for fallen women, or St. Thomas's, is a group of buildings, dating from the latter part of the Victorian era, situated to the north of Basingstoke station and was used as a rehabilitation centre for fallen and destitute women from about 1876 into the 1930's.

The need for such a home was recognised around 1850 and eventually a house for about 14-20 women was established at Hardway in Hampshire around 1862, the women and girls coming from the areas of Portsmouth, Portsea and Gosport. (A receiving house was also established at Ash to take women from the Aldershot Camp area). The driving force for this venture was Admiral of the Fleet, Sir A.P. Ryder, KCB who gave his support from the first conception right up to the building of St. Thomas's in Basingstoke.

Unfortunately the house at Hardway had to close due to lack of funds, and around 1867 the Reverend Lascelles, with the aid of Sister Harriot Hewitt, took over the home and under their leadership the home started to pay its way. Eventually the house proved to be too small and an appeal was made by another prominent figure, Bishop Wilberforce, to raise funds to increase the number of women helped: "No Diocese in England so urgently needs such a provision as that which contains such centres of misery as those for which these refuges are provided. A most efficient council has been appointed to carry out this work, but large funds are urgently and immediately wanted. I entreat you to

assist me in raising them."

Around 1874 Bishop Harold Brown purchased 3 acres at Basingstoke with the option of 2 more, and St. Thomas's began to take shape. It took about 10 years to complete with much fund raising taking place during the building. Bishop Harold Brown's appeal for funds stated: "There can be no work holier than Christ-like work than to rescue these women from misery and ruin and to bring back the fallen to penitence and purity".

St. Thomas's took in about 70 women and entry was voluntary - but obviously preferable to the workhouse or the street. The women were expected to stay for 2 years and were schooled in the three Rs, laundry, baking, needlework and also singing. The women were housed in cottages rather than dormitories, a system recommended by Admiral Ryder. The cost of keeping the women was £25 each per annum but the house took in work - laundry mainly - to help with the finances. The youngest were girls of 14 years and work in service was found for all women and girls at the end of their stay. In a comment on the younger girls, which shows that thought and effort went into looking after the women and children, the Reverend Bigwither said: "If we receive a child at 14 and send her out to service at 16, we dismiss her at a most dangerous age. At such an age the reaction from the 2 years restraint issues in too frequently in an abuse of regained liberty. Experience shows that these children need a term of at least 3 to 4 years of supervision of some kind." In January 1868, after the death of Sister Hariot Hewitt and the resignation due to ill health, of Dr. Millard, the first Warden, the Sisterhood of St. Thomas the Martyr at Oxford, took on the responsibility of the Home.

The buildings form a quadrangle and the last building to be completed was the Chapel. 'This was designed by the Architect, Sir Henry Woodyear in 1884 and is a Grade 2 listed building. There is also a fountain in the centre of the quadrangle, presented by Admiral Ryder.

St. Thomas's was used by the Education Authority until about 5 years ago but is now becoming derelict - the present occupiers being the Security Guards - but it has a special place in the history of Basingstoke due to the fact that such rehabilitation facilities of that period must be of a unique nature. There is an account of the early years of St. Thomas's by the Reverend Reginald Fitzhugh Bigwither kept in the Record Offices at Winchester, and John Fisher has written an article, published in the Hampshire Magazine and is presently writing another.

Bert Rogers

The site is now private housing and a care home. Many of the Victorian Buildings remain. - Ed.

TADS New Website

The new website is now up and running. Our thanks go to Steve who has put a great deal of time and effort into constructing it from scratch using a new program. The old site was not easy to update or add information. Ian and Neil had been struggling with it for some time. With their help, all the old information has been transferred to the new site.

Apart from the new look and layout, one small thing that you may notice when you log on to it, is that it will come up with Steve's personal website in the header bar. This does not cause any problems and is being rectified. It is all down to Domain names, and will cost money to sort.

One very new feature is Wikidata to be found under Genealogy. A treasure trove of information about the whole district. Do have a look.

Social Media

Another innovation by Steve is to create TADS Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts to improve the Society's profile. These are all linked to the website.

It should create interest and may get more members.

Other news

100 Days of Film

Although Hampshire Record Office remains closed to the public until further notice, Wessex Film and Sound Archive has launched '100 days of film' – an online project enabling you enjoy local archive film footage spanning from the 1910s to the 1970s.

Starting from April 2nd, film clips will be shared at 9am daily via our YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/WessexFilmArchive and also on the Hampshire Record Office Facebook page [HampshireArchives](https://www.facebook.com/HampshireArchives), and [@HantsArchives](https://twitter.com/HantsArchives) Twitter feed. Clips, many of which have not been seen publicly before, include:

1920s beach outings to Milford-On-Sea, complete with cloche hats and dapper waisted dresses

New Forest scenes in the 1920s – Bolton's Bench and Rufus Stone
Saints playing at the Dell in colour back in the 1930s

Aldershot Military Show in the 1960s.

A lady in Pamber Heath has said that she has lifted some paving slabs in the garden in readiness. And that was after only a week of self-isolating with her husband. Was she joking?

Doctors have issued a report on the first patient to be treated using a Dyson ventilator. He is picking up nicely!

And now for something brighter:



The gorse flowering on Silchester Common

***TADS annual membership is £18 per person.
Correspondence to Tadley and District History Society,
c/o 5 Church Road Pamber Heath Tadley. RG26 3DP
Email: tadshistory@googlemail.com***