



June 2021

TADS Newsletter

Website - www.tadshistory.com

21st June - Freedom at last?

Wednesday 16th June at 8 pm via Zoom

‘The Great Sandhurst to Sandhurst walk’

By Graham Harding

From Sandhurst (Gloucestershire) to Sandhurst (Kent) via Sandhurst (Berkshire). A 180-mile walk across the whole of southern England, along Roman roads, ancient trackways, and long distance paths, including historic sights and interesting places, with an undercurrent of WWI.

The log in details for the talk will be sent in a separate email.

If you need help using Zoom, the TADS Website has information and a contact number.

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www.tadshistory.com

Future TADS talks

21st July 2021@ 8pm on Zoom

‘The Pursuit and Sinking of the Bismark’

By David Bickerton

Due to the on-going Covid restrictions this will be held via Zoom.

TADS Zoom Talk on 19th May 2021

1752 and All That: the derivation of the modern calendar.

by Mark Bowman

Why 1752? Well that was the year that Britain changed its calendar system and famously lost eleven days. The title of the talk is a play on '1066 and all that' the hilarious book from the 1930s by Sellars and Yeatman which treats British history very irreverently, long before satire was invented in the 1960s.

So what caused the need for the change of calendar? By 46 BC the calendar used by the Romans was about 3 months ahead of the seasons. The time the earth takes to go round the sun is called a solar year and is approximately 365 and one quarter days, which because we count in whole days means there will be errors accumulating. So Julius Caesar imposed the Egyptian Solar calendar on the Roman Empire. This was based on the above 365.25 days with a leap year every fourth year so that February had 29 days, but two February 23rds and no 29th! This all sounds more or less familiar and it was called the Julian Calendar.

To get things back on track 46 BC had 445 days. The calendar was slightly problematical at first but by AD 8 it was working well, except that 365.25 days is an approximation and the Solar Year is nearly 11 minutes and 15seconds shorter. It doesn't sound much but it does build up into an error of about 3 days every 400 years.

By the late 16th Century the calendar was out by 10 days and Easter was falling on the wrong day, which was almost heretical. (Mark had explained the rules for calculating the date of Easter which were set by the Council of Nicea in

325 AD). Consequently Pope Gregory XIII decreed that in 1582 the date should be advanced by 10 days which made the Vernal Equinox March 20th and Easter fell on the 'correct' day. Other adjustments were incorporated in that 3 out of 4 years ending 00 are not leap years, which keeps the Summer Solstice close to the 21st June. Most Catholic countries happily adopted this Gregorian Calendar, but other Christians (Protestant, Russian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox) did not hold truck with any Popish idea. This was especially true of England, where nearly 50 years before, King Henry VIII had fallen out with the Pope and under Queen Elizabeth the country was vigorously Protestant.

Did it matter? Possibly not but it did cause some strange things. The records show that William Shakespeare died on 23rd April 1616. They also show that Miguel de Cervantes, author of Don Quixote, died on the 22nd April 1616, apparently one day earlier, but as he was in Catholic Spain and Shakespeare was in Protestant England it was actually 11 days earlier. Trade was also a bit difficult. Today we sometimes get a bit crossed up with time zones, like the continent being 1 hour ahead of us. Or having to look at the iPad clock app to see if our son in Australia is likely to be awake if we ring him. So imagine the fun of trying to meet someone if their date is 10 days behind your own! It could not last and the Gregorian calendar was gradually adopted by various countries from 1582 to 1923, meaning that for 341 years the date depended on what country you were in. Britain and its overseas possessions adopted the new calendar in 1752.

1752 was the shortest year in British history. Whether the people went round shouting 'Give us back our eleven days' is debatable, but Mark showed a Hogarth painting with such a banner seen through an open window. It also meant there was a loss of 11 days rent for the Quarter or 11 days occupancy for a quarter's rent. Either way a not inconsiderable amount, so the Government moved the tax date to the next year.

New Year - King Henry II moved New Year's Day to 25th March in 1155 and this was the basis for the quarter days – Lady Day (25th March), Midsummer's Day (24th June), Michaelmas Day (29th September) and Christmas Day, all close to the solstices, or equinoxes. In 1752 with the calendar change New Year's Day was moved to 1st January, (ordinary people had always regarded 1st January as New Year, even if the state didn't). The tax year stayed at Lady Day plus 11 days = 5th April. Another day was added in 1800 which is why our tax year begins on 6th April.

Mark also said that Guy Fawkes Day should be on the 15th November as the Gunpowder Plot was in 1605, before the calendar change.

What did the rest of the world do? Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark

changed in 1700, GB in 1752, Sweden in 1753, Alaska in 1867, China officially in 1912, but in practice it was 1929, the Ottoman empire in 1917, Russia in 1918 and Greece in 1923 (which affected the birthday of the late Prince Philip). The Swedes had actually started the change in 1700 by planning to omit the leap days for 40 years, but due to war they forgot 1704 and 1708, so they were then out with everyone. To sort it out they had a 30th February in 1712 and in 1753, February was only 23 days long. The Poles had an even more confusing time going Julian - Gregorian – Julian – Gregorian (WWII), depending on who was occupying them at the time. Today the Gregorian Calendar is almost universal, but there are still some others used for local purposes e.g. the Chinese.

As the earth's rotation is not precise and a bit variable due to many factors we do need still need to make occasional very small calendar adjustments called leap seconds.

Thank you Mark for your erudite and humorous explanation of what at times must have been a baffling situation for those involved, let alone to those of us living today.

Richard Brown

P.S. Later that evening I was reading a book which said that the 'White' Russians in exile in London before the Second World War still used the Julian calendar, because they loathed the communist Bolsheviks who had moved Russia to the Gregorian calendar in 1918! They must have had fun arranging meetings with other people.

TADS Meetings

With the easing of Covid -19 restrictions we are hopeful of getting back to real meetings at St. Paul's Church Hall. We are hoping this will start with the September meeting. Due to Covid cleaning requirements it may be in the church rather than the hall.

The Committee

Steve Davidson recently found a very old magazine with a Tadley story:

THE
SPORTING MAGAZINE;
OR
MONTHLY CALENDAR
OF THE
TRANSACTIONS OF THE TURF, THE CHASE,
And every other DIVERSION interesting to the
MAN OF PLEASURE, ENTERPRISE, AND SPIRIT.
FOR SEPTEMBER, 1805.



The Toadster of Tadley

Tadley has its fair share of local folklore, including the “Tadley Treacle Mine” and the “Tadley God Help Us” episode. The story of the “Tadley Toad” is not primarily about a Toad but a sad tale of a particular person living in “Poor Tadley” in the late 18th century.

“The Sporting Magazine” was a very popular national magazine that published stories provided by its readers. The anonymous author, who lived in the neighbouring Parish of Pamber vouched that the story was true based on his own

experience. The language is a bit hard to follow in parts but it is well worth the effort. It might help to know that half a peck measure equated to a small bag and to remember that Satan's metaphoric traditional disguises include the snake in the Garden of Eden and Satan's description as "Squat like a toad, beside Eve, whispering in her ear" from the John Milton's Paradise Lost IV written in the 17th Century.

"Tadley, in Hampshire, near the Bath road, and on the borders of Berks, is proverbially called "Poor Tadley", with much reason, and is the unspeakable disgrace of the county: for the peasantry have been there, immemorially, in a most deplorable state of poverty, at least their condition had not been amended fifteen or twenty years ago.

Here dwelt about that period, the hero of this memoir, a lone man, about fifty years of age. He inherited his house, with garden, orchard, and one field, from his ancestors, some of whom had made away with the land which had composed the original estate. What had particularly disgusted him with the world, and with human society does not appear obvious, and the probable cause was a constitutional turn to misanthropy. On the death of his father and mother, and departure of his sister into the world, he at once gave up all human society, and attached himself to that of animals generally, keeping cats, dog, poultry, etc. with which he constantly held communion.

They all lived together in a comfortable state of perfect equality of rights, until the original contract was broken by the cats, which the president of the society perceived, at length, busy in destroying all intruding rats and mice. Cats were instantly banished for their antisocial and murderous principles, and were never readmitted. An owl, which had been admitted from compassion, was afterwards dismissed for a similar reasons.

After this a toad became an candidate, and urging his plea every morning, whilst the man was in his garden, it was at length attended to, and many conversations took place between the parties, equally intelligible and interesting as those of old, between Mr. Toad's ancestor and Mrs. Eve. The man now feeding the toad daily, with whatever he himself ate, it came at the appointed hour, and even followed him about the garden, until at length this chief, regretting that so good a citizen of his community should be without shelter, and wishing to have his new friend always ready at hand for conversation, he actually built the toad a small wooden sty, into which the animal willingly crept, and in that place was daily fed, until he became of

enormous size, and actually resembled a duck. The instant he heard his master's voice, the monster would crawl out, pacing from his vast bulk, and with his fine eyes, greet his patron in loving and grateful expression. He however knew the man's voice so well, that he would neither listen nor stir to any other, though several persons attempted to call him out.

Whether the man was tempted by money, or persuasion, is unknown, but he at length sold the toad to a surgeon at Reading, and it was confidently asserted, that when dead, it would not go into a half peck measure. The loss of the toad, however, affected the misanthrope much, and he seemed to be, as it were stung by his conscience, for such a piece of treachery, as the sale of a fellow animal, when most fortunately, one Sunday morning, a snake of respectable bulk and appearance, made his addresses, and begged admission into the society. This new comer was fed constantly, until at length it agreed to take the deceased toad's lodging, which it occupied many months, to the man's infinite solace and content, who now found himself indemnified for the loss of his toad.

Indeed, this speckled inmate was far more cheerful and conversable, and would writhe and route himself in playful attitudes, whilst the sun beams glittered on his polished scales. He would rear himself up on end, in order to reach the meat from his feeder's hand; and drink milk from a saucer like a cat. The man was delighted, and his snake was thriving to an enormous bulk, some say the size of a human leg.

When certain good church-going gossips in the neighbourhood, taking it in to their wise heads, that snakes were not Christian, which being the case, they ought not to eat Christians' victuals, they conspired, and, in the owner's absence, murdered the snake!

The man never after held up his head, sickened and soon died.

PAMBRENSIS'.

What's on? Events which may be of interest.

Milestones Museum is open. The website to buy admission tickets online and pre-book a day and time to visit can be found at:

<https://www.milestonesmuseum.org.uk/>

26 & 27th June - Milestones Mid Summer Fair

The Willis Museum and Sainsbury Gallery is also open. Entry is by pre-booking a day and time to visit. Classes, workshops and live performances are available to book at Hampshire arts centres.

Ending 11 July - A free **exhibition of stunning original paintings** by Hampshire artist Isabel Hurley.

<https://www.hampshireculture.org.uk/willis-museum-and-sainsbury-gallery>

‘The Friends of the University of Reading’ video tour of the University’s London Road campus.

TADS’ Ian Burn, is also a member of ‘The Friends’. Together with another ‘Friend’, Dennis Wood, he has produced the first of what they hope will be a series of videos taking viewers on a virtual tour round part of the campuses. Called “An Historical Tour around the University’s London Road Campus”, the link to view the video is:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wG1dG67960c>



***TADS annual membership is £20 per person.
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