



November 2021

## TADS Newsletter

Website - [www.tadshistory.com](http://www.tadshistory.com)

**Another real meeting soon!**

Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> November at 8 pm in **St. Paul's Church,**  
The Green, Tadley. RG26 3PB.

### **‘Kings, Boxes and Dots: The history of the Royal Mail and Post Offices’**

**By John Rogers**

In 1840 Uniform Penny Post was launched marking a revolution in the way the postal system could be used. Rowland Hill's postal reforms opened up the postal system to almost every person in Britain. John Rogers is a Social & Postal Historian.

***Important** - Our list of Covid related rules for attending the meeting will still be in force. These will be sent out as a separate document.*

Please see page 2 for information about meetings at the church.

*(Everybody welcome - visitors £3.00)*

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)**

## **Future TADS talks:**

**15<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

### **TADS Annual General Meeting**

*(Venue to be advised)*

#### **TADS Meetings at the Church -**

**Audibility in the Church** - Many of us were disappointed by the audibility of the speaker at October's meeting and we apologise if it marred your enjoyment of the talk. The church acoustics are not good and the speaker did not get the lapel mike clipped on in a good place. We suggest that you sit as near the front as possible for the coming meeting.

#### **Parking at the Church**

We are meeting on the same evening as another group who will be in the hall. We hope to get back in the hall at some time in the future.

Since there will be two groups, parking spaces may be limited. If the car park is full please park alongside the Green and take care not to obstruct driveways.

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#### **Member Information**

We have been checking the lists of members and the information that we hold. It is noticeable that for about a quarter of members we do not have telephone numbers. This is particularly true of those who have joined on-line. Very occasionally these telephone numbers are very useful, such as informing you of a very late change of speaker or even cancellation of a meeting due to adverse weather.

For this reason we will be contacting some of you in order to complete the records.

**TADS Meeting 20<sup>th</sup> October 2021.**

**James Aitken, oft times known as John The Painter:  
the First Modern Terrorist.**

**By Alan Turton.**

Hurrah! Our first live talk for many a long month.

In the good old days of yesteryear we tend to think of baddies as highwaymen, footpads or pirates. To have our own home-grown TERRORIST is quite alarming.....

James Aitken, or John the Painter, would no doubt be analysed in the 21<sup>st</sup> C as 'having a syndrome' or similar. He was born in 1752, in the reign of King George II, the 8<sup>th</sup> of 12 children to an Edinburgh tinsmith (known as a 'whitesmith'). His Dad died very young but James did have a rudimentary education till he was about 14 when he became apprenticed to a painter.

Alan said James 'was short, scraggy, red-headed, freckled and he stammered', and not your Rembrandt, Picasso or Constable but a HOUSE painter. That apprenticeship didn't last long: tiring of Scotland's Depression he high-tailed it off to London. Still unable to find work – he took up foot-padding, or your-money-or-your-life guntoting highwayman, or just a common thief.

James was 'sold to a sea captain' and in 1773 sailed from Deptford, London to Jamestown, Virginia, U.S.A. Finding Jamestown rundown and the Americans disagreeable to the Scots, he legged it to North Carolina, telling fibs and tall stories along the way.

However, James favoured American Independence from Britain so he went on the spree as a saboteur and mercenary against us, not for ideological, zealous or religious reasons but to idle away his unsatisfactory life.

At the time of the Boston Tea Party, 1775, he returned to Britain and decided to join our Merchant Navy at Liverpool. Well, they did supply clothes (a uniform), money and security didn't they?

No, tiring of his brief sojourn at sea James joined an Army regiment, took the vast sum of 26 shillings (about £1.30p today) and deserted! Soon he'd covered most of England's counties, Alan said, as a robber.... Everywhere he went he carried his painting equipment and radical material.

Travelling further South, probably by cadging lifts or hitch-hiking, John/James arrived briefly in Titchfield, Hampshire. From there, on to Portsmouth Dockyard and the rope-making shed, with arson in mind. That

being unsuccessful – the matches wouldn't ignite – he went via Exeter to Plymouth Docks. No luck. So, off to Paris where one Silas Deane, the American Commissioner egged John on to further sabotage in England by giving him encouragement and a passport.

As an arsonist John was mostly unsuccessful, but he was being noticed around pubs, Chatham Dockyard, Titchfield again, Bristol, Portsmouth, Plymouth and news had reached King George III (reigned 1760-1820). The King thought we'd been infiltrated by an American spy and agent, so John/James was hunted in earnest. In Calne, Wiltshire, he rifled shops, but his luck ran out in Andover and in Hook where he was caught at the Raven Hotel and incarcerated in Odiham Gaol. Some of these towns and villages were uncomfortably near to Tadley – we were lucky! While on remand in London's Clerkenwell Prison, an agent was 'planted' in his cell. John talked and talked and incriminated himself.

In 1777 John the Painter was tried in Winchester Great Hall, and found guilty. He was hanged in Portsmouth Dockyard on the specially-constructed, highest gibbet ever. 20,000 people watched the hanging spectacle of this lonely, infamous, terrorist, arsonist, rapist individual.

What a waste of a very, very young man's life. John/James the Painter, Terrorist Extraordinaire, was only 25 years old when hanged. But amazingly the only crime he ever regretted happened in Basingstoke: he raped a milkmaid. Alan said his Scottish family may have been unaware of his criminal life – unless they read about it in the papers.

Thank you Alan, for this very vivid, brutal and shocking story you told, but it had to be said – maybe there's a warning for someone, somewhere.....

Rosemary Bond.

*Thank you Rosemary. Its nice to have you back again doing your inimitable write ups after a long break - Ed .*

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# TADLEY AND DISTRICT HISTORY SOCIETY 2022 CALENDAR

## nostalgic views of local shops through the years



TADLEY AND DISTRICT HISTORY SOCIETY  
2022 CALENDAR



**£7.00 EACH OBTAINABLE FROM**

Profile Print & Copy (cash or cheque)  
50 Bishopswood Rd, Tadley RG26 4HD;  
5 Church Road, Pamber Heath RG26 3DP.



OR ONLINE FROM TADS WEBSITE [WWW.TADSHISTORY.COM].

**This Calendar is now on sale.**

## Annual Subscriptions

For many of us these are becoming due as the end of the year approaches. Subscriptions can be paid through the website, by Cash or Cheque posted to Carol's address given at the foot of the last page, or by Cash or Cheque at a meeting.

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## Display boards

TADS owns several large display boards which are used for exhibitions and are a very useful asset. Unfortunately they take up quite a bit of room and their current resting place is becoming unavailable so we need to find somewhere new.

Does any one have a dry place where they can be stored? If you think you can help please contact Carol.

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**Fungi** - This Autumn seems to be a very good one for fungi. These are Sulphur Tufts *Hypholoma fasciculare* (*I've got a new book*) in a neighbour's garden.



## ***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/>

Milestones is going Christmassy festive from 4<sup>th</sup> December to 3<sup>rd</sup> January.

**The Willis Museum and Sainsbury Gallery** is open with a few restrictions. <https://www.hampshireculture.org.uk/willis-museum-and-sainsbury-gallery>

On until 30 January 2022. **The Art of W. Heath Robinson**, a free exhibition. (*The man who drew crazy machines - Ed*).

Until 12th December Basingstoke Art club have **Celebrations** an exhibition of their work showing at the museum.

**Friends of the Willis Museum** (7.30pm at the Museum - Non-members £3, and book through the Museum on 01256 465902)

18th November. A Place Apart – **Park Prewett Hospital** a talk by Malcolm Isted.

**Basingstoke Archaeological and Historical Society** (*Church Cottage at 7.30pm*)

9th December. **The Cup that Cheers**: tea before Victoria by Joy Pibworth – Historian and guide

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***Covid 19 is still about - take care.***

***TADS annual membership is £20 per person.  
Correspondence to Tadley and District History Society,  
c/o 5 Church Road Pamber Heath Tadley. RG26 3DP  
Email: tadshistory@googlemail.com***