



October 2023

TADS Newsletter

Website - www.tadshistory.com

Next Meeting - Monday 9th October at 8 pm, at Baughurst and Heath End Village Hall, Heath End Road, Baughurst, RG26 5LU.

‘The Windsor Chair ’

By Stewart Linford

The Windsor chair has probably been made for well over 300 years in the woods and workshops of the Chiltern Hills centred on High Wycome. At the peak, about 1910, there were 200 factories in High Wycome making 4000 chairs a day. Today there is almost nothing left of the furniture industry and the town is better known for its supermarkets.

Stewart gave this talk to TADS by Zoom in January 2021 at the height of the Covid pandemic. He insisted on returning to give it in person, so he can show his many examples of Windsor chairs and their construction.

(Everybody welcome - visitors £3.00)

If you wish to stop receiving the Newsletter please email Richard Brown or notify Carol Stevens or a Committee member.

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

www.tadshistory.com

Future TADS events:

Monday 13th November 2023 in Baughurst & Heath End Village Hall

‘Building Spitfires without a Factory’

by Alan Matlock

TADS last meeting 11th September 2023

The Complete History of Thatcham in Old Photographs by Dr. Nick Young

‘Thaec’ is Saxon for ‘thatch’ and ‘ham’ means town.

In 1900 Thatcham’s population was 2,500; in 1974: 10,000 and now in 2023, around 30,000. Nick said Thatcham has decreased in area since the 17thC, which then included Greenham, Midgham and Cold Ash. So the 1848 photo of Halfway House near the Swan pub on the A4 is now a mile ‘adrift’ of the current Thatcham boundary.

At the junction of Shaw House and the A4, flourishes the Fruit and Flower Farm built in 1907-8. It was a goldmine of gardening and bee-keeping on the west side of Thatcham and it worked well because it used ‘The Friends System’ of cloches, etc. to bring on produce early and successfully. One student, Mabel Sowerby, went on to run the show (and it was also a forerunner for one of the same on the east side of Oxford: the Waterperry Gardens). Thatcham’s Mary Peers called it ‘getting gold from the soil’. And you still do. In this area also were buildings called ‘The Jam Factory’ and the Red Cross.

Nick showed a photo of Old Henwick Cottage, 1537: once a farm but now very-much-sought-after houses. A gap therein was thought to be a priest hole but is actually for smoking meat – common then in a refrigeration-less era.

The A4 adjoining Shaw Road had a turnpike (where you paid) and there’s also a milestone there. The Thatcham roads were NOT well-kept – the money was

‘misappropriated’..... Nick said. He remarked that the 1960s-70s changes in Thatcham were lost – nothing was recorded. We think we’ll remember for ever, but it doesn’t work that way! were one-up-one-down.....

Cooper’s Cottage, of Marlborough’s Thomas Cooper fame, was built in 1824 and helped control the A4 stage coaches from London to Bath via Thatcham (and back). Each leg of the journey had to be completed in under 6 hours. Sadly Mr. Efficiency Cooper eventually went bankrupt.

There are 3 ‘Green Lanes’ in Thatcham – originally footpaths where people walked over green meadows from time immemorial.

Crown Meadow was the ‘Crown’ pub. Nick said there are countless tunnels and pubs in Thatcham. The White Hart was accidentally demolished in 1954 when a Guinness lorry crashed into it. Allegedly the local rat population had a great time swimming in Guinness. Crown Meadow is where Harry Lester built racing cars and there’s still a ‘car’ connection there to this day: the Vehicle Research Establishment.

Thatcham seems to have for ever been bisected by the A4 Bath Road. Although there’s now the M4, the A4 is still a force to be reckoned with. The High Street was by-passed in 1962 – it was formerly the Broad Way and once South Street (+ a market) and possibly West Street. Thatcham likes name-changing, Nick said.

Thatcham Manor House is now sadly a source of building materials. There are 4 once-thatched cottages known as Monks’ Chambers because Reading Abbey monks often stayed over. The Parish Church of St. Mary was re-built in stone in the 12thC. As the burial ground was so full, burials were made outside of Thatcham for a time.

In 1893, Robert Wyatt butchers, moved from Speen to Thatcham (they’re now in Wolverton, Hampshire). Thatcham’s longest-running business, Pinnock Bros., had wood turners there from 1810 till 1885. The A4 Nine Shilling Cottages were demolished to build a police station: now flats. Some buildings were constructed in 3 stages from 1500 onwards: W/Cs, electricity and other amenities added when appropriate. A Preservation Order was put on Chapel Street’s houses, but one pensioner, Mary Steer, wouldn’t move out!

The Plough Inn was found to have an infant’s skeleton in the roof – apparently quite a common occurrence, Nick said. (Were these really good-old-days?!)

The 1300 Blue Coat School, actually St. Thomas School or Winchcomb, was a

charity school in 1707. The Headmaster was very strict and cane-happy.....
The school is now a Community Centre.

From Francis Bailey School one could originally see south to the Kennet and Avon Canal. Impossible now. Too much in-filling and the main line railway, London to the West Country, has a large army depot near it. It's not too far to Colthrop's Paper Mill.

From a photographic point of view, Thatcham has much of interest, which makes one want to delve further back in time – which Nick has promised to do next year.

Thank you, Nick, for Thatcham-so-far.

Rosemary Bond.



As my own contribution to Old Photos of Thatcham, this is the cottage on the A4 in the centre of the town where my maternal Grandparents spent their last days. (1953/5) Theirs was the left door, but today that has gone. Such is the way things change.

RB

TADS 2024 Calendar and ‘An Historic Walk Through Tadley’ display in the library.

The 2024 Calendar is finished and will be priced the same as last year £7.00 and £10.00 with packing and postage.

To mark its publication we are going to put the display back in the library from **19th October until 6 November**. The calendar is based on the display and uses some of the photographs.

Natural History corner



I have found several of these little chaps in the garden this summer. It is a Rhombic Leather Bug *Syromates rhombeus*. Apparently not at all common. The sources say it is found on ‘spurreys, sandworts, etc’ in dry sunny places. Ours don’t seem to know that as we find them on our loganberries and raspberries!

Pamber Heath Memorial Hall

Those of you who have been past the hall in the last few months will have seen that it is undergoing major refurbishment and extension. It is due to be finished in December.



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

Milestones Museum The website to buy admission tickets can be found at: <https://www.milestonesmuseum.org.uk/>

21-29 Oct - **Halloween Fun** at Milestones.

Until 31 Dec - Our **Wash Day** exhibition. From domestic living to household gems, what will you find?

The Willis Museum and Sainsbury Gallery

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

Sunday October 29 talk 2pm-3.30pm, hosted by the museum management: **Discovering astronomy**, by *Dr Tony Hersh*. Tea or coffee and cake are served afterwards. There is a charge of £6. Please book on-line at www.hampshireculture.org.uk/willis-museum-and-sainsbury-gallery

Starting Oct 25: **We think the world of you:** an art exhibition by David Remfry, RA. *Evocative pencil and watercolour portraits exploring the connection between people (including a number of celebrities) and their canine companions.*

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

19 October - **AGM** followed by '**More photos from the past**'.

Basingstoke Archaeological and Historical Society (7.30 at Church Cottage, Basingstoke)

12th Sept - **Tharaqa - Egypt's Black Hero** by Hilary Wilson of Southampton Ancient Egypt Society.

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