



November 2023

TADS Newsletter

Website - www.tadshistory.com

**Next Meeting - Monday 13th November at 8 pm, at
Baughurst and Heath End Village Hall, Heath End Road,
Baughurst, RG26 5LU.**

‘Building Spitfires without a factory’

By Alan Matlock

The Supermarine Spitfire fighter aircraft was built at Southampton and along with the Hawker Hurricane became vital to the defence of Britain in WWII. The Germans also knew that, and during the Battle of Britain in September 1940 bombed the two Southampton factories to oblivion.

The big new Spitfire factory at Castle Bromwich near Birmingham was struggling to start production and something needed to be done in a hurry. Alan will tell the extraordinary story of how production was revived in just a few weeks.

(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 11th December 2023 in Baughurst & Heath End Village Hall

‘TADS Annual General Meeting and social’

TADS last meeting 9th October 2023

The Windsor Chair

by Stewart Linford – Chair Maker Extraordinaire.

To ‘bodge’ or ‘botch’, that is NOT the question! Skilled furniture makers ‘bodge’ wood. Stewart’s love of wood led him to make chairs from 1955 – lots of them. And later as boss of his 49 co-workers.

The Windsor chair is defined as a type of wooden chair constructed of turned spindles that are socketed into a solid, saddle shaped wooden seat. Most Windsor chairs have a motif and the elm seat is sculpted into a slight bowl shape. The seat is of elm because it knits together across the grain and doesn’t split when the legs, etc are driven into the holes, Stewart said. Stretchers (horizontal struts) are used to hold the legs in position. Splats are the flat piece with motif on the back of the chair. Surprisingly there were no books on chair making – bodging and other skills were inherited.

Furniture, especially chairs, was made in the beech-clad hills of the Chilterns in the High Wycombe area of Buckinghamshire. Handily, the London market is quite near, also Windsor. (There are still several famous furniture factories in the High Wycombe area: Ercol, Parker Knoll, Glenister etc.). Bodgers worked out in the woods. They split up easily-splittable beech trees to turn the round parts of the chairs.

Stewart has a degree in Wood Science AND he has the Freedom of the City of London. For anyone wanting to know the history of chair-making, there’s always the Chair Making Museum in High Wycombe where you can learn more about ‘entarsis’ (a tapered dowel) or a ‘bobtail’ (the strengthener in the back of the chair). And much, much more.....

Stewart must have been some ‘wunderkind’ in boyhood. Aged 8 he built his own toolbox, dreamt of tools, built items in wood, and his ‘wood heaven’ was chair-making at High Wycombe College in 1972 – where he also realised you ‘learn stuff all your life’. Stewart was good because he began his own business in 1982 with NO MONEY and ONE ELECTRICITY SOCKET in the WALL! (*And in an ex-pig sty - Ed*)

Stewart said a Double Bow Windsor Chair is a sophisticated piece of furniture constructed of yew, beech and Norfolk bog oak: it’s a ‘fusion of colours’.

He showed us a chunk of time-honoured dark coloured oak wood from a 1922 refurbishment of Nelson’s flagship H.M.S. Victory in Portsmouth Dockyard. Victory was then placed in a Dry Dock where she still is. The H.M.S. Victory wood chunk is worth £1,000.

A 1750 Windsor stool has 3 legs. There were 7 or 8 samples of seating for us to see. The 18th Century saw many advances in furniture design, Queen Anne’s reign, 1702-1714, was productive and we hear a lot about Queen Anne (chair) legs! A cabriole leg (goat’s leg) chair was very strong, apparently. In 1765, George III’s time saw the shaping of the Windsor Chair seat by ‘bottomers’: craftsmen who could do the seat-shaping with wet clay. A sharp adze tool was often used – and you had to be careful not to cut off your toes, Stewart said.....

The 1765 Strawberry Hill Gothic chair was difficult to make. It’s bow back was of one piece of yew wood. Any surviving chairs from the 18th C are now worth £2,500.

The 2006 BBC TV series, ‘The Greatest Britons’ mentioned Winston Churchill’s chair. It’s now worth £5,500 and is made of Spanish Cedar and oak from Blenheim Palace – Churchill’s birthplace. It has a special large cigar drawer fitted under the seat as Churchill smoked TEN £33 each/cigars, daily! The said chair also had a hat rest under the seat and the great man’s hat was always placed ‘upwards’ because of superstition. Stewart gave Churchill’s ‘Finest Hour’ speech from this chair complete with hat and a cigar.....

Some post-WWII Windsor ‘Victory’ chairs were made – selling at £3,500 each.

We asked Stewart if OLDER methods of chair-making are still used – yes, he said, but reiterated the warning about the adze and the toes!

Thank you, Stewart, for your enlightening chair-making chat. Who would have believed the special wood, the skills, the love, care and enthusiasm involved in the making of the not-so-humble wooden Windsor Chair?

Rosemary Bond.



Above Right - A simple Windsor chair.

Above left - Stewart and his double bow Millenium chair.

Right - four of his sample chairs.





Left - The Strawberry Hill Gothic chair. Right - Stewart on his Churchill chair.

Jean Monger

I am sorry to report that Jean died in late October.

Jean was a member of TADS for many years and came from a long established Tadley family. Her parents kept a shop in Malthouse lane in what is today called Crooked cottage.

The funeral will be held at 11am on Friday the 24th November at St Paul's Church, the Green, Tadley.

TADLEY AND DISTRICT HISTORY SOCIETY 2024 CALENDAR

AN HISTORIC WALK THROUGH TADLEY

TADLEY AND DISTRICT HISTORY SOCIETY - 2024 CALENDAR



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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/>

Milestones has many **Christmas** themed events starting from 18th November, including a **Christmas Market** on 2-3 December.

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 November 26 talk 2pm-3.30pm, hosted by the museum management: **Country mouse, town mouse** by Dr Steven Havers. *A fun and informative talk on rodents including a study of Wood Mice on farmland and the effect of agricultural practices on them, plus the behaviour of House Mice in inner city areas.*

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)

Nov 16 The **history of shopping in Basingstoke**, by Bob Clarke. *In the 1850s of its population of 4300 Basingstoke had 12 bakers, 8 boot and shoemakers 7 butchers, 12 drapers/tailors, 8 ironmongers 9 grocers, and 6 general shopkeepers.*

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

9 November -**Stanchester Discoveries** by Mark Peryer -BAHS

**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**