

December 2023

TADS Newsletter

Website - www.tadshistory.com

**Next Meeting - Monday 11th December at 8 pm, at
Baughurst and Heath End Village Hall, Heath End Road,
Baughurst, RG26 5LU.**

‘TADS Annual General Meeting and Social’

A package of documents will be emailed to members before the meeting. If any of you are willing to join the committee you will be extremely welcome. In any case we need as many of you as can come to the meeting to ensure that we have a quorum.

The formal meeting will be followed by an opportunity to get together with other members. If you have any artefacts, pictures or documents you think will be of interest to other members, please bring them along for display. As usual drinks will be provided and members are asked to bring a contribution to the food, both savoury and sweet. Assistance with clearing up and cleaning crockery, etc. will be much appreciated

(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 8th January 2023 in Baughurst & Heath End Village Hall

‘Welcome to my world - Butler to the Royal Family’

By William French

TADS last meeting 13th November 2023

Building Spitfires Without a Factory. By Alan Matlock, Chairman of the Spitfire Makers Charitable Trust.

The Spitfire ‘plane, the icon of Victory, and very evocative of the wartime and part of our WWII ‘furniture’. So said Alan.

These ‘planes must have been like angry little mosquitoes defending us, and we probably didn’t give them a thought as to how and where they were built. All 20,000 of them. Well, many were made throughout Hampshire: bits in Baughurst (now called Lattice House), also in Newbury, and Reading, Berks and Salisbury, Wilts. The ‘plane’s chief designer and engineer was R.J. Mitchell, who joined Supermarine in 1917. Noel Pemberton-Billing, 1881-1948, had founded the Supermarine factory and ‘kept adding wings and engines’ etc., Alan said.

The enemy knew from peacetime Zeppelin and mail plane pre-war photographs, where the ‘planes were built in Southampton and in September 1940 during the Battle of Britain in three bomber raids the two Southampton works of Supermarine were destroyed. So construction was spread around the South of England. Southampton’s bombing was so severe some people couldn’t recognise WHERE they were – the morning-after-the-night-before.....

The enemy even left a church spire intact as a landmark guideline. On 18th November 1940, the Germans bombed Southampton’s The Dell, Ice rink and many houses. Frank Calton, an A.R.P. warden, blew his whistle on Tuesday

24th September 1940, to warn people to take cover, but even so 44 were killed. Later we had tried to decoy the Germans towards bombing woodland. ‘Starfish’ tanks of oil were set alight to simulate explosions and ‘dummy’ airfields luckily decoyed more bombs than real airfields. A female farmer even painted white stripes on her black cow to keep her safe from tractors, etc.

So, peppered around in Hampshire’s garages, houses and barns, these ‘planes were built. And work the ‘plane-builders’ did, sometimes for 3 days solid! Wartime P.M. Winston Churchill recognised both men and women worked for the war effort – the latter sending messages, plotting courses, etc. as well as working in the factories. Someone even composed ‘The Hampshire Spitfire’ song: to raise money for Spitfires. Spitfire rivets were sold at 6d. (2.1/2p) each for the same reason. (At the other end of the scale Alan said in 2015 Spitfire Mark I P9374 was sold for £3.1 million.....) *

As Alan is Chairman of the Spitfire Makers Charitable Trust in Southampton, he and others aim to preserve our memories for FUTURE Brits, which is a very good thing. Although WW2 was about 80 years ago, even in the 21st Century mankind still flirts with, and participates in, wars of all kinds. Maybe stories such as Alan’s, can help put the brakes on war.....

We have to remember that humble motorbikes and sidecars were used to ferry Spitfire parts to aircraft assembly points and airfields, round the South of England.

Alan said that towards the end of WW2, some Spitfires carried barrels of beer strapped to them, courtesy of South Breweries, which were dropped to our troops over Normandy.

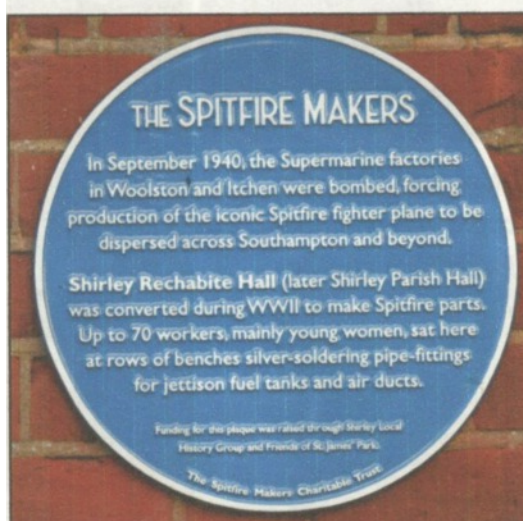
Today there are 7 Spitfire Construction sites in the Southampton area, sporting Blue plaques. And many more are planned to be unveiled soon to commemorate, preserve and educate. (*There are 30+ known sites in Southampton alone -Ed*)

Thank you, Alan, for your erudite talk, which jogs memories for us, and will for future generations.

Rosemary Bond.

(* *A very original Tadley/Aldermaston built Photo Reconnaissance Spitfire is currently on sale for £3,750,000. Then you need somewhere to store it, etc, etc. - Ed*).

The Spitfire Makers Charitable Trust's Blue Plaques



One of the Spitfire Makers blue plaques sited in Southampton on Shirley Parish Hall where Spitfire parts were made by up to 70 workers, mainly young women.

There is a very good case for having two of these plaques in Tadley, one in the general area of Hangar Road where Hangar 5 stood in which Spitfires were assembled, and the other on what is today Lattice House on Baughurst Road. Lattice House was originally the Venture Bus Garage which in WWII was requisitioned and used as a store for Spitfire parts.

The Trust's Website is www.spitfiremakers.org.uk

An associate website is www.supermariners.wordpress.com which has a lot of information about the dispersed production of Spitfires across Hampshire and beyond, including Tadley/Aldermaston Airfield.

Tadley Sunday Market

I am sorry to report that Tadley Sunday Market will be held for the last time on Christmas Eve. It has been in decline for some time. Like many things it was knocked back by Covid 19, and then it had to move from the big Stacey's car park to the small site near the fishing pond due to the development of new industrial units. There is a possibility of it starting elsewhere in the area.

Jane and I have been patrons for over thirty years and will miss it a lot but when did it start? Does anyone know?



Above: 3 Dec 2023. Below: 1 Feb 2008



A short video about the Portway Roman Road

The Project Group have produced a short video of information and photographs showing evidence for the route of the Portway. This was made to support our case that the proposed Bewley Homes housing development would be partially built over the road and obliterate the remains. Therefore a full excavation is required ahead of any building work.

We have sent the video link to parties who may be involved in the decision making process for any development. At the moment the Bewley project seems to have stalled but if it is not them, another developer could have similar ideas.

The video can be seen at:

https://youtu.be/Pa9tla3KAcU?si=_Q9pBAp8FiJO8JuV

TADS Committee - new members wanted

We really could do with some extra Committee members. We are down to six people, none of us getting any younger as I was reminded by my recent very unexpected spell in hospital. This small number does not leave us with any cover for such events.

Meetings are normally monthly, during daytime and are currently held via Zoom. They last a couple of hours and it is all quite friendly.

TADS Talks Programme 2024

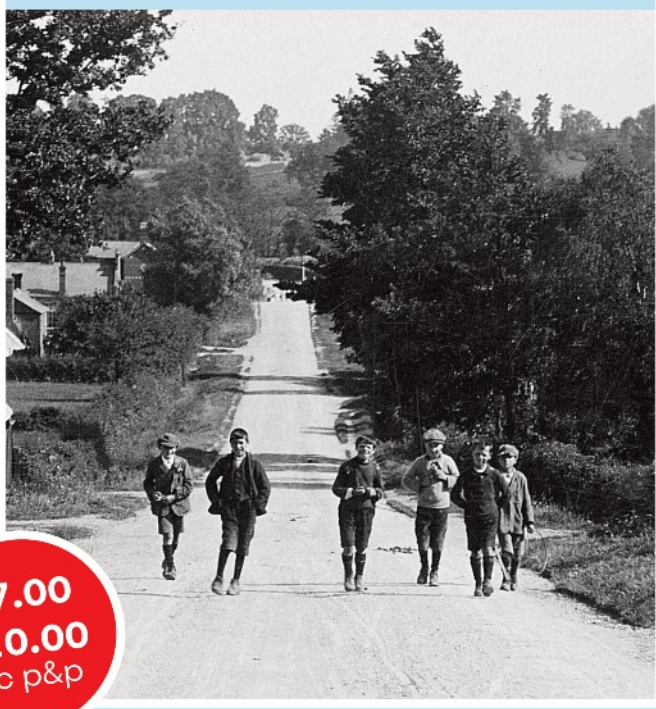
Stephen Barber has completed a very interesting programme of talks for next year. There is one query for late in the year which has yet to be resolved. A new programme card will be issued at the AGM.

TADLEY AND DISTRICT HISTORY SOCIETY 2024 CALENDAR

Now on Sale

AN HISTORIC WALK THROUGH TADLEY

TADLEY AND DISTRICT HISTORY SOCIETY - 2024 CALENDAR



£7.00
£10.00
inc p&p

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CHEQUE AND BACS

TADS website [www.tadshistory.com]



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** lasting until the end of the year, including 'Meet the reindeer' on 22nd December. (No extra charge).

The Willis Museum and Sainsbury Gallery

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

Until 28th Jan. **We think the world of you:** an art exhibition by David Remfry, RA. *Exploring the connection between people and their dogs.*

Dec 17 (2pm to 3.30 pm) Sunday afternoon tea and talk: **Jane Austen** and the women of her time, by Terri Reid. 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

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

No Talk this month.

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

Dec 14 - **Tools of the Stone Age** by Henning Wilkens of BAHS

*The Committee wish everybody a Happy
Christmas and a prosperous New Year.*

**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**