



June 2024

TADS Newsletter

Website - www.tadshistory.com

**Next Meeting - Monday 10th June 2024 at 8 pm, at
Baughurst and Heath End Village Hall, Heath End Road,
Baughurst RG26 5LU.**

‘The Great Train Robbery’

By Tony Keep

Some of us were around when the Great Train Robbery took place nearly 61 years ago, so may remember much about it. Younger people may have seen articles in the media. I am sure that Tony Keep will correct and enhance our knowledge with the story of an audacious crime. He is a volunteer guide at the Thames Valley Police museum, Sulhamstead. He retired from Thames Valley Police as a Chief Constable in 1995 after 32 years service. In 2013 he conducted his own in-depth research of The Great Train Robbery.

(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 July 2024 in Baughurst & Heath End Village Hall:

‘Stratfield Saye house - a virtual tour’

By Michael Aris/Richard Bennett

TADS Last Meeting 13th May 2024

General Brock and the Maiwand Lion by Mike Cooper.

This story is of Reading and relates to two Reading landmarks: Oxford Road’s Brock Army Barracks (about 1½ miles west of the town centre) and the Forbury Gardens’ famous giant statue of a Lion. Apart from commemorating military matters the two are not otherwise connected.

The barracks are named after Guernsey-born Major-General Sir Isaac Brock (1709-1812) who led British and Native American troops in repelling United States forces when they tried to invade Canada across the Niagara River in October 1812. Brock himself was a visual target, being 6’2” while his men were only about 5’7” average. He was mortally wounded in the Battle of Queenston Heights on 13th October, the final action. Brock had always tried to keep good relations with as many people as possible.

Although hardly known in this country, General Brock is commemorated in Canada by Brock’s Monument a 56 metre (185ft) Nelson’s-column-like-memorial atop Queenston Heights in Queenston, Ontario. The barracks in Reading were designed by Major H.C. Seddon and built in 1887/8. Brock Barracks housed 800 men in its walled-in enclosure – to keep the soldiers in and us, the public, out, Mike said. One block in the barracks for the 49th Regiment of Foot was named 'Isaac Brock'. (90 years later, this regiment united with the 66th Foot to form the first and second battalion of the Royal Berkshire Regiment). It wasn't until 1934

that the depot was formally named 'Brock Barracks'. Army families lived close-by in areas around the Barracks which were used during World Wars I and II,

The second monument of Mike's talk was the Maiwand Lion. In the 1879-1881 2nd Anglo-Afghan War the town of Kandahar was central to operations and our forces had guns, baggage and 2,000 camels. The soldiers of the 66th Berkshire Regiment were at that time were dressed very brightly in red and blue uniforms – no camouflage used. The Berkshires came mostly from agricultural areas including Boxford and Tilehurst – and they were fighting in temperatures of over 100 degrees F in the Kandahar area. We were thoroughly beaten and a great many of our soldiers were killed. The regimental mascot dog, Bobby, survived the melee, gaining a medal from Queen Victoria but was later ignominiously killed in Fareham!

Maiwand seems to be commemorated more in Afghanistan and the USA (than here in Britain) with many restaurants etc. thus named. In Maiwand in 2009 British troops found guns from the LAST century.

The sculptor of the Maiwand Memorial lion in Reading's Forbury Gardens was George Blackall Simonds, a member of the local brewing family. It was unveiled in December 1886 to commemorate the deaths of 329 men from the 66th (Berkshire) Regiment during the campaign in the Second Anglo-Afghan War in Afghanistan between 1878 and 1880. The 16 ton, 31 feet long lion was constructed of 9 pieces of cast iron -costing £1,088. (£105,000. in 2024's money). It's still there to this day and seems to be a symbol of pride and courage even if it is 'snarling towards Russia'! Mike said. It is often said that Simons committed suicide because the stance of his lion was criticised. Not true. He lived another 43 years after the lion was erected, dying in 1929 aged 86.

Thank you, Mike, for your enlightening talk about Brock and the Lion, which was a new concept for many of us.

Rosemary Bond.

N.B. British forces have been into Afghanistan at least four times. The score is Afghans 3 Brits 1. Do politicians ever learn? - Ed



L. The Brock Monument on Queenston Heights, Ontario, Canada. *(Photo Tomkinsr)*



R. Brock Barracks, Reading. *(Photo from Reading Museum)*



The Maiwand Lion in the Forbury Gardens, Reading. *(Photo QuentinUK)*

D-Day. 80th Commemorations of 6th June 1944

The TADS D-Day information display will be at the following events:

A St Paul's event on the Green, Tadley on Saturday 8th June

A big church service at St Mary's Church, Tadley on Sunday 9th June.

Natural History Corner



More of a warning this month - There is a Box hedge separating our drive from next door. It suddenly began to look very unwell. In fact it was being shredded by non-native Box Moth caterpillars. It is amazing how quickly things so small can devastate a mature hedge. - RB

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/>

Until 30th June. **D Day commemoration** - Discover Hampshire's pivotal role in D-Day with our commemorative display. Uncover the bravery and innovation that shaped history, with rare photographs and insights into the prototype Terrapin tank by Thornycroft.

The Willis Museum and Sainsbury Gallery

May 9 until 28 July - **Karl Blossfeldt: art forms in nature:** a Hayward Gallery touring exhibition featuring 40 photogravures by one of the 20th century's most influential photographers.

June 30, 2 pm – 3.30 pm: Sunday afternoon talk (followed by tea or coffee and cake) **Birds of Antarctica, South Georgia and the Falkland Islands**, by *Keith Betton. Introducing penguins, albatrosses and other birds of southern latitudes.* £7 and must be booked.

To book go on-line at www.hampshireculture.org.uk/willis-museum, or call in or phone 01256 465902.

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

20 June, The life of **Mary Russell Mitford**, 1787 -1855, by *Margaret Simons. Best remembered for "Our Village: sketches of rural life, character and scenery", this writer drew inspiration from her home village of Three Mile Cross near Reading.*

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

10th June **The Basingstoke Cornfield Murder** by Bob Clarke – BAHS member and local author.

**TADS annual membership is £20 per person.
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