November 2025

TADS Newsletter

Website - www.tadshistory.com

Next Meeting - Monday 10th November 2025 at 8 pm, at Baughurst and Heath End Village Hall, Heath End Road, Baughurst RG26 5LU.

'The British Redcoat of the 18th Century'

By Alan Turton

Alan is a military historian specializing in the English Civil War and the following period. His talk will cover the story of the ordinary British soldier at the time of the expansion of the empire in Canada and India as well as threats of invasion at home. We will look at their daily lives, what they wore, ate, were equipped with, how they were recruited, and what happened to them at the end of their service.

(Everybody welcome - visitors £3.00)

N.B This is a change from the scheduled talk.

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 December 2025 in Baughurst and Heath End Village Hall

TADS Annual General Meeting and social

TADS Last Meeting 13th October 2025

British Railways during World War II

by Richard Marks

In 1939 as the second World War loomed the railways of Great Britain were run by four companies which had been formed in 1923 from the larger companies and the dozens of small ones. (Over 120 in all). The 'Big Four' companies were; The London, Midland, and Scottish (LMS); London and North Eastern (LNER): Southern (SR); Great Western (GWR). They were all very territorial and not given to co-operating with one another. There were also some independent railway engineering companies.

All four companies had major engineering works in which to build steam locomotives, trucks and passenger carriages as well as maintain them and the tracks and infrastructure. Among the works were Doncaster, Derby, York, Swindon, Didcot, and Eastleigh.

In 1939 the Ministry of Supply (MoS) was formed and tasked with supplying all the equipment and materiels required by the armed forces, with the exception of aircraft and ships. The MoS took control of the railways which would be essential to the war effort.

The period from the declaration of war with Germany in September 1939 until May 1940 is known as the phony war when this country was little affected by enemy action. However the railways were used to deliver the troops, vehicles and equipment of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) to the channel ports for embarkment en route to France. Although initially quite small the force had grown to over 390,000 men by May 1940 when they were pushed out of France

by the Germans and rescued from the beaches and port of Dunkirk and later from Le Havre and other channel ports. The railways were essential in moving the men away from Dover and the channel coast to inland barracks.

Britain was covered with a network of railways which proved to be a great advantage once second phase of the Battle of Britain started with the Germans bombing the towns and cities. Invariably, if a railway was bombed there would be an alternative route readily available. The Big Four controlled approximately 19,890 route miles in 1939, (today it is under half that distance). In contrast, on the continent there was usually only one line connecting towns and later on in the war the Allies found it easy to cause major disruption by bombing railway lines.

The Big Four's workshops were also used in support of the war effort and redirected into making things like tanks. Replacement locomotives were needed which led to the Austerity classes of basic locos with no frills like name plates. (See photo on page 4).

The blackout and anti-invasion precautions meant station names were removed which led to staff having to call out the station's name when a passenger train stopped. Platform edges were painted white in the hope passengers would not fall off when it was dark. In general passenger travel was discouraged and with damaged lines journeys could be very slow. Early in the war the railways were used for moving evacuees away from the cities to safe remote locations.

One unforseen effect of the war was the loss of men to the armed forces and their replacement by women who proved themselves very able in many roles. e.g. ticket offices, spy spotting, signal boxes, junior management, cleaning, maintenance, and deliveries within the station's local area. Throughout the war the railways were kept fully used, not only with moving men and war equipment, but also the needs of industry and households. In the run up to D-Day some minor Hampshire lines were used as linear sidings for the storage of military equipment ahead of the crossing to France.

By the end of the war just about everything to do with the railways was worn out, not only locomotives and rolling stock but the railway lines. More than 6 years of minimal maintenance had done a lot of damage.

Thank you Richard for your very interesting and fact filled talk.

Derek Monger and the Ed.

An Austerity 0-6-0 T colliery locomotive

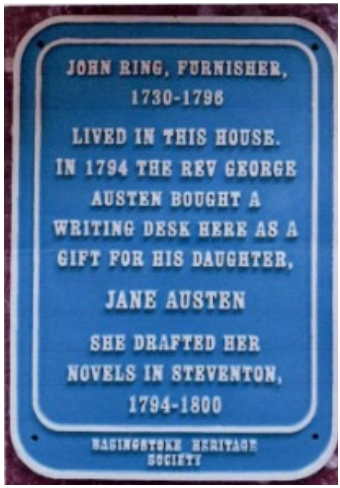
Photo by David Ingham of Bury, Lancashire

Jacksons of Jacksons Corner of Reading

A new exhibition remembering the famous store opens on 2 December in the Welcome Gallery at Reading Museum.
Step into Reading's history with a special display of two stunning scale models – Jacksons' Duke Street Stores and the iconic Jacksons Corner – shown together for the first time. These intricately crafted models capture the store in its Edwardian heyday, celebrating a local landmark that first opened in 1875 and served generations until its closure in 2013.

Inspired by public memories, this exhibit is a heartfelt tribute to a beloved institution. Whether you shopped there, worked there, or just remember it fondly – come and reconnect with a piece of Reading's heritage.

A new Blue Plaque in Basingstoke



On Friday 5th December the Basingstoke Heritage Society will unveil their latest blue plaque. (Their 25th). It will go onto 83 Lower Church Street which was the home of John Ring, who sold household goods to the great and middling sort in the 18th Century. It was on the 5th December that the Reverend George Austen purchased a writing desk for his daughter Jane from John Ring. Jane Austen wrote about her writing desk which was a treasured possession and would have been made in Ring's workshop. The desk is today displayed in Jane Austen's house at Chawton, nr. Alton.

Neil of Profile Print

It is unusual for this publication to feature people who were not TADS members but Neil Handley of Profile Print has been a great friend to the Society for years and has done all our printing at what must have been heavily discounted prices, including the books and display panels. His print shop was in the Bishopswood parade of shops but 2 or 3 years ago he moved his machinery into an annexe of his house in Tadley.

I am very sorry to report that he unexpectedly died on the 22nd October, far too soon for such a lovely man. His expertise and help will be much missed. Our sympathies have been sent to Lorraine.

Assistant Facebook Moderator

We would like someone to help Neil Forde administer TADS Facebook page. You need to be familiar with Facebook and it can be done from the comfort of your own home. Please contact a committee member if interested/able to help.

Natural History Corner

I was quite surprised when this very large fungi suddenly appeared at the bottom of the garden. It was a bit past its best and the white powder on the caps nearest the camera is spores. The largest cap was 200mm / 8 inches across. It was not a species I recognised. When I found it in my Fungi book it was a shock - Honey Fungus - which the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) has just branded it as the most destructive fungal disease in British gardens. Obviously something I don't want and it is not easy to get rid of.

It almost certainly explains why some of the trees in next door's adjacent hedge have recently died.

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/

6 -7 Dec. - Milestones **Christmas Market.**

22-23 Dec. - **Meet the Reindeer.**

The Willis Museum and Sainsbury Gallery

12 Nov 25 - 22 Feb 26. - **Beyond the Bonnets**: Working Women in Jane Austen's Novels, a new exhibition.
15 Nov - 11 Jan. - **Inspired by Jane**, a Basingstoke Art club exhibition.

Hosted by the Museum Management (*Archaeology Gallery, second floor*)
30 Nov 2 pm: Sunday afternoon talk: ***Food and Drink in the Time of Jane Austen*** *by Jenny Stevens.* £7 including tea, coffee and cake. If able, please book online at *www.hampshireculture.org.uk/event/sunday-tea-and-talks-military-time-jane-austen*
- or drop into the museum.

Friends of the Willis Museum *(7.30pm at the museum, non-members £5.00 and please book by telephone on* 01256 465902)

20 Nov. - **Christmas Traditions** by Diana White

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

1st Dec. **Jane Austen – Woman and Writer by** Maureen Stiller – Hon. Secretary of the Jane Austen Society

TADS annual membership is £20 per person.
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