



June 2026

## TADS Newsletter

Website - [www.tadshistory.com](http://www.tadshistory.com)

**Next Meeting - Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2026 at 8 pm, at  
Baughurst and Heath End Village Hall, Heath End Road,  
Baughurst RG26 5LU.**

### **‘It takes the biscuit’ - a history of biscuit making in Reading, Berkshire.**

**by Nigel Crompton**

Commencing with a description of the history of biscuits from ancient times, Nigel will then look at Reading through the centuries as far as biscuit making is concerned. Three main companies are discussed in depth: their rise and later decline. A large number of biscuit varieties are mentioned which those of a certain age will remember, When the opportunity permits a number of artefacts are brought along to add to the presentation and usually lead to memories.

*(Everybody welcome - visitors £4.00)*

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](mailto:richard@ilexind.plus.com) or Carol Stevens (0118) 9701578*

**[www.tadshistory.com](http://www.tadshistory.com)**

## **Future TADS events:**

**Monday 13th July 2026 in Baughurst and Heath End Village Hall**

### **‘The Lady with the lamp - The Florence Nightingale story’**

**By Paul Whittle**

**TADS Last Meeting, 11th May 2026**

## **A history of the University of Reading**

**by Ian Burn**

Ian spent 32 years at the University and is still involved with conducting guided walks in the Whiteknights campus, so he is very well qualified to talk about its history.

The University is unique in that it is the only UK university that received its charter between the 2 World Wars. That was 1926 and it thus celebrates its centenary this year. Its origins go back into the Victorian era with the founding of the Art and Sciences Schools in 1860 and 70 in the Valpy Street area of Reading. (The Art School building is now the Reading Museum, the Science School was housed in the ancient Hospitium of St John).

The Hospitium of St John at the back of Reading Museum



In 1885 the schools were recognised as an Extension College of Oxford University. The extension colleges were for people who wanted a university education but could not afford to attend a traditional university. The lectures were often given by visiting lecturers who could easily come by train from Oxford or London. The extension College chose Agriculture as its speciality and the British Dairy Institute was founded in 1896. A hostel for students was also founded at Colyhurst on the Bath Road.

It was very successful as an extension college and by 1903 there were departments of Letters, Science, Art, Horticulture, and Agriculture, considerably out growing the Valpy street buildings. A new site was needed. Alfred Palmer of the biscuit family let the Acacias site on London Road to the College to which they moved in 1905. The Acacias became a Staff Common Rooms and the Library, the Great hall (now Grade 1 listed) and other buildings were built on the site. Wantage Hall was built for male students and in 1909 Alfred Palmer gave his own house, St Andrews, to be used as a hall of residence.



Main entrance to University College Reading on London Road

The College was now operating as a university but it was not until 1926 that it was finally granted official university status, (finance had been a problem). The University was successful and by the end of the Second World War it had once again run out of space. Unexpectedly, Whiteknights Park became available and was bought cheaply in 1947. The park was not far from the London Road site and was a large area of land with good access through the many park gates. *(Ian gave a talk to TADS on the history of Whiteknights Park in October 2022, report in Nov. 22 Newsletter)*. It was 10 years before the first of many new buildings was erected. The London Road site was retained, although some of its land was sold off and St Andrews was a Japanese College for many years until the building became the home of the Museum of English Rural Life (MERL).

Queen Elizabeth II in 1957 opening the Faculty of Letters, the first academic building on the Whiteknights site.



There had been 6 substantial houses in the park, but only two or three remained which were repurposed by the University. Foxhill, the largest which had been designed by the renowned architect Alfred Waterhouse, was used for the Law Department. There were a large number of 'Government Buildings' in one area of the site which were left over from WWII and used as offices for a time. Another organisation which came onto the site was The European Centre for Medium range Weather Forecasting which has a splendid new building.

The University of Reading is now a very well established and respected organisation, which is very fortunate to be located in a beautiful parkland setting.

Thank you Ian for your very interesting talk showing the the history of the University is far longer than most would expect.

Richard Brown

## Ideas for Speakers

Bernie is starting on ideas for next year's (2027) programme of talks. If you know of any suitable speakers or have subjects you would like to be covered, please let us know. Email Richard or speak to Carol or Bernie at a meeting.

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## The Royal British Legion

The Tadley Branch of the Royal British Legion are celebrating the centenary of their founding with a service at St. Mary's Church, Tadley on 4 July. They are particularly interested in making contact with former members before the event. Photographs relating to the Tadley RBL are also most welcome.

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## Donnington Castle, Newbury, tours.

David Peacock who gave a talk about the castle in April last year, mentioned at the end of his talk in April this year that English Heritage were going to arrange some guided tours of the castle remains. There has been a fair bit of confusion over how to book the tours but the latest information from David is the tours are now live at: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/donnington-castle-guided-tours-tickets-1988322554284>

David Peacock will be one of the guides.



## **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/>

27 June **Armed Forces Day**. The event will bring the 1940s era to life.

### **The Willis Museum and Sainsbury Gallery**

To 28 Jun: **Bees!** Hampshire's Hive of History & Nature a new exhibition in the Sainsbury Gallery.

Hosted by the Museum Management (*Archaeology Gallery, second floor*)

28 June, 2pm - Sunday Afternoon Talk: **A Field in Runnymede (The Magna Carta)** by Alan Turton. £7 including tea, coffee and cake. If able, please book online at:

<https://www.hampshireculture.org.uk/event/sunday-tea-talk-field-runnymead-alan-turton> - 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*)

18 June, **The Woman who gave Birth to Rabbits** by Bob Clarke

*In 1726, Mary Toft from Godalming became the subject of considerable controversy when she tricked doctors into believing that she had given birth to rabbits. The resultant public mockery ruined the careers of several prominent surgeons.*

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

Their next meeting is not until Monday 7th September 2026.

***TADS annual membership is £25 per person.  
Correspondence to Tadley and District History Society,  
c/o 5 Church Road Pamber Heath Tadley. RG26 3DP  
Email: [tadshistory@googlemail.com](mailto:tadshistory@googlemail.com)***