

Boat Building in Hamble

10 February 2004 - Roy Underdown Pavilion

Building boats sounds like fun, and at our meeting in February, Tony Norton told us about some of his experiences in the industry. He started as an apprentice with Lukes in 1942. They owned most of the buildings in Back Street - now Rope Walk - but there were very few facilities. Tony remembers only one water tap, and sometimes having to use candles to see what they were doing. The apprentices often had to collect timber from the North Yard, near Crowsport, and they took handcarts with them because some of the beams were very heavy. Tony's description of coming back down High Street, barely under control and almost ending up in the river, raised a laugh. They worked hard but they also had fun playing football or hockey on the Green, until Bartletts offered the use of their field, so they moved there. On one occasion some bullocks approached them, and one lad got too close. His boiler suit caught on a horn and was ripped from top to bottom. Tony told us a lot more about boatbuilding on Hamble River, but a full account would take pages.