

History of Hamble Parish Council

19th April 2012 - Roy Underdown Pavilion

Ian Underdown the Society's Chairman and also Chairman of the Parish Council gave a very interesting and thoroughly enjoyable talk on the 'History of Hamble Parish Council'. The talk could have nearly been entitled the history of Hamble over the last 100+ years. It was illustrated with more than a hundred pictures showing the varied work of the Parish Council over the years and what Hamble was like in the past.

Hamble Parish Council was formed in 1894, when rural areas with a population of over 300 people had to establish a Council. The first meeting was held in the Village School and five Councillors were elected. Ian showed pictures of Hamble as it was then, a maritime village with a number of large houses and two farms. The maritime theme of the Council's work continued throughout its history as it does today.

Hamble was much smaller at this time and its boundary was along Lovers Lane, across the fields to the river where Marina Drive is today. In 1901 the boundary changed as Satchell residents, who were part of Hound Parish, asked to become part of Hamble. On a number of subsequent occasions the boundaries expanded to as they are at present. Council's meeting venue also changed from the School, to the Reading Rooms in Back Street (Rope Walk), Memorial Hall, Hamble River Sailing Club, Mount Pleasant and Roy Underdown Pavilions.

In 1898 Councillors complained that on a number of occasions they had to climb through a window to gain access to the meeting room, because the School was locked. A hundred years latter there was a similar problem for the first meeting at the Roy Underdown Pavilion, as there were no tables or chairs, so Councillors had transfer the meeting to the Mount Pleasant Pavilion.

Those present learnt many things that they did not know about Hamble and Ian gave an insight into the workings of the Parish Council which involved matters which Society members would not have dreamt it had undertaken. In the early years it was responsible for providing a fire brigade (a hand cart) and the Council employed a scavenger to collect rubbish, empty toilet earth closets and pails. It also dealt with complaints about residents living on the Quay throwing their night spoil out of their windows. The village's rubbish dump was on Hamble Common.

Ian showed how the village grew, with a significant change coming during the First World War when the aviation industry came to Hamble from when the population increased. Hamble residents particularly enjoyed seeing what it was like before their houses were built, especially the aerial views. This included viewing

Westfield Common and Sydney Lodge before the aircraft factory and the Cliff Avenue estate were built.

The Parish Council was involved in all the plans for these developments including naming the roads. In the early years it was responsible for deciding the priority of tenants for the council houses. Pictures were shown of the prefab temporary housing after the Second World War, as well as recent developments of the TS Mercury grounds, College of Air Training site and Manor Farm.

Up until 1975 the Parish Clerks worked from their own houses, but in this year Heather Smith, the Clerk, worked from the first Council Office, a converted garage at Mount Pleasant. Her family insisted that their home telephone number be transferred to the Council at this new office, so Heather was no longer telephoned about Council business at her home.

The audience were surprised by some of the pictures, such as the foreshore packed with people in 1971 for the return of Chay Blyth from his round the world solo sailing voyage or the filming of “Howard’s Way” television programme in 1987, examples of events that the Parish Council helped organise.

They were also intrigued with some of the Council’s smaller projects, such as the Well Lane refurbishment completed in 2006, which add to the quality of life in the village. This tied in with the early history of the Council when it was responsible for the Village Pump.

To conclude the meeting, former and current Councillors shared their memories of the Parish Council and they all agreed that one of the most important was its non political status that helped it to do its best for Hamble. Another common comment after the meeting was that anyone who missed this meeting, maybe because they thought it would not be an interesting subject, would be very disappointed to have missed the many fascinating pictures showing Hamble’s past and its development to as it is today.

A summary of the History of Hamble Parish Council can be seen on the Parish Council’s website www.hambleparishcouncil.gov.uk