

Smuggling in the Hamble Valley

17th July 2007 - Roy Underdown Pavilion

There was a good attendance to hear William Vine, from Hamble Valley Heritage, talk about 'Smuggling in the Hamble Valley'. There are many stories from the past about smuggling, but many tales about this illicit activity are fictitious. Folklore insists there are smuggling tunnels in our Hamble Valley villages but there is very little factual evidence.

William took us through how smuggling developed throughout history and the techniques used. Various Acts of Parliament placing taxes on certain imports and exports, such as wool & salt, encouraged smuggling, as many inhabitants resented this and if possible wanted to avoid paying these duties.

Hamble's location next to the river has made it a natural place for smuggling over the years. William told us that Hamble was one of the first places to have 10 dragoons stationed in the village from 1723. By 1805, Hamble also had a Salt Officer located at Hamble Point. Another Hamble man called Sturgess, operated as a successful smuggler in the 18th century heyday. By 1783, he had sufficient funds to build a new 20 gun cutter, called 'Favourite', in the endeavour to improve his performance in his chosen trade. William reminded us that smugglers are still being caught on the river today.