

900 Years of St Andrew's Church

23rd June 2009 - Hamble Church

To mark the 900th anniversary of the founding of St Andrew's Church, the Hamble Local History Society arranged a visit and guided tour of the Church. Bert Allwood, the guide for the evening, started by telling the history of the order of monks from Tiron in France, who founded the Priory of St Andrew at Hamble. This included how St Bernard became the Abbot of the Abbey of Tiron after a religious leader, returning from the Crusade, was eaten by a lion! It was a small group of Benedictine monks from his Abbey who built the Hamble Priory and Church.

Bert told how Hamble became a staging post for other French priories in England and that just three Abbey of Tiron built churches survive today; Hamble, Hound and Bursledon. He also believes that the Hamble monks established Manor Farm and an ale house where Ye Olde Whyte Harte is situated today.

During the guided tour Bert showed the various stages of construction and important features of the Church. The location of a 2nd century Roman floor outside the vestry was indicated and Roman tiles can be also seen in the walls. The original Norman Church, which was smaller than present day, was built 1109-1128 on the remains of a Saxon Church.

In 1377, the Church was burnt and plundered by a French raid on the English coast, despite its connection with a French abbey. Winchester College eventually took over ownership and replaced the burnt roof and rebuilt the tower to today's height, as the original tower was about a third lower. Bert showed Society members a sheet of lead found during restoration work of the top of the tower which had been inscribed, "The Queen past this way 14 of July 1846".

Over 40 members enjoyed a fascinating tour of the Church which gave them an opportunity to view parts of the Church that are not normally seen and a chance to ring the bells. Many saw for the first time the new font cover which was commissioned to mark the 900th anniversary.

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