

100 Years of Hamble River Sailing Club

6th June 2019 - Roy Underdown Pavilion

In recognition of the centenary of Hamble River Sailing Club (HRSC) the Society arranged for its Chairman, Ian Underdown, to give an illustrated talk about its history on this important occasion for the Club.

The Club was founded on Wednesday 6th August 1919 when nine men, seven local and two who came to Hamble at the end of the war, met on the Village Green and decided to form Hamble River Sailing Club with "its object to encourage the racing of small yachts and boats". As they did not have a clubhouse it used the Bugle Inn for its meetings and started its races from the pub's garden.

The first races were on a handicap basis with the Hamble One Design the only class of boat sailing against other individual designed boats mostly fishing boats. As well as races for keelboats there were races for centreboard boats and the dinghies that raced with the Club were heavy clinker or carvel built and usually kept on moorings. In 1921 some X One Designs, that were gaffed rigged at that time, took part in the handicap races and the Solent Sunbeam designed and built as the result of a request from three Hamble based yachtsmen raced with the Club from 1923.

In 1925 the Club wanted a cheap centreboard dinghy for the use of its young members and local boat builders Luke Brothers designed and built the Hamble Star that went on to race with the Club for over 40 years. By 1928 the Club had sufficient members and funds to build its own clubhouse overlooking the foreshore in the Bugle Inn garden. During the interwar years the Club organised an annual regatta with other village residents that was a big event in the area. Club activities were suspended during the Second World War and after it the nature of the Club changed with more dinghies racing and fewer keelboats.

When its 21-year lease at the Bugle Inn terminated the Club move to its current site at the top of the ferry hard and initially only had a Nissan hut for its clubhouse but during the 1950s built a wooden clubhouse in stages. During this period it was hosting dinghy open meetings, Area and National Championships and its members were champions in many events nationwide.

By the 1960s HRSC was one of the premier dinghy sailing clubs in the country and started its renowned early season Warming Pan weekend open meeting. In 1972 six of the 13-man Olympic sailing team were club members of which two brought back medals. During the 1970s it replaced its wooden clubhouse in phases, with the current clubhouse being completed in 1980. In the early 1980s there was a decline in dinghy racing but in 1982 the HRSC Winter Series started what was to become one of the leading race series in the country. In the 1990s the colourful sail Foxer dinghy revived regular dinghy racing at the Club.

In the new millennium a cadet and training programme was developed that reinvigorated the Club and greatly increased its membership resulting in it becoming a RYA Training Centre. This was followed by other initiatives that has made the Club as it is today.

There can be very few sailing clubs in the country that can boast such a successful history. The Club has had European and World Champions as well as Olympic medallists and numerous National Champions in a wide range of classes. It also provided the first British Olympic Sailing Coach and subsequently an Olympic Team Manager. Its members have won big races such as Round the Island Race and played a prominent part in America Cup challenges.

Club members have played a leading role in the boating industry. The country's top boat designers such as Uffa Fox, Ian Proctor, Angus Primrose and David Thomas have been members, as have leading mast manufacturers and sailmakers.

During his talk Ian highlighted some of the people that played an important role in the Club during its history from the Luke brothers, retired fishing smack skipper Robert Williams known as Uncle Bob and Gregory Robinson to his son Nick Robinson, Bill Hobbs and more recently Peggy Dorothy.

At the end of the meeting Ian was thanked for his research to provide a fuller more accurate story of the Club, particularly from some of HRSC committee members and members that attended. Those present were amazed and fascinated by his pictorial history of HRSC with many pictures that had not been seen before.

A booklet about the history of 'Hamble River Sailing Club 1919 - 2019' has been produced. See the 'Publications' section for details.