

Caravan Site at Hamble

In the mid 1950s a caravan site was set up for holiday use in Satchell Lane, near Badnam Creek, and this brought many new casual holiday visitors to Hamble, many of whom were to have long associations with the village. This was a time very different from today. Limited financial resources for holidays meant the pleasures had to be simple and holidays were taken in this country, rather than abroad. Also, due to the acute housing shortage in the area, after a few years of operation, permission was given to use part of the site for permanent residents.

The site name was to be known as 'Riverside Caravan Park' and it was the riverside location that was the big attraction for many visitors. Recollections of the 1950s and 1960s, when Mr H.R. Smith (Smithy) owned the site, were of simple enjoyable times with an easy-going atmosphere. For example, 'Smithy' would have no objections to visitors putting up a tent alongside their caravan to accommodate members of large families or their friends. The site had the normal shop and toilet block, with an area for casual move-in/move-off caravans or tents. It also had fixed caravans for the visitors to rent, which at that time had dull colours and ridiculously small windows compared to modern versions, as well as the residential caravans.

One such visitor from that time, travelled by train from the outskirts of London regularly during the summer months, carrying his boating equipment with him to stay at the caravan site so he could use his small boat on the river. He fell in love with Hamble and its river and although now well into retirement he continues to visit Hamble most weeks but he now travels by car and stays on his boat which now has comfortable accommodation.

A well known actor and his wife frequently stayed at the caravan site and had a lovely flower bed around their caravan. They passed their time walking fair distances and most people realised they enjoyed it as an escape from their public life, so did not ask for autographs or discuss his current production. By coincidence he was one of the stars of the locally based TV series 'Howards Way'.

Another family who visited the caravan site, liked Hamble so much, that they came back each year for their main summer holiday while their children were growing up, and later when they could afford it, moved to Hamble to live. Theirs is a familiar story of enjoying the river while learning from their experiences.

At the bottom of the site was Badnam Creek (no marina), an ideal place for novices to start their boating adventures. Not knowing one end of the boat from the other and wind forces one to five just words from a foreign dictionary, they would shove off their dinghy and sail to the other side with the wind behind, soon to end up on the other bank stuck on the mud to the amusement of a far off audience. Eventually they would manage to get back, may be because mother nature decided to be kind, with the wind dropping and changing direction.