

Old Newspaper Reports of Hamble

9th November 2023 - Memorial Hall

The Society's Chairman, Ian Underdown, lead a talk about many amazing old newspaper reports of Hamble that were included in a new booklet which was launched at this meeting.

He started by describing how newsagents and newspaper deliveries developed in the village. At the beginning of the 1900s anyone that wanted a newspaper had to go to W H Smith at Netley station, until Mary Woodward opened a shop in Lower High Street that became Bevis newsagent, sweets & tobacco shop. Claude Bevis had to get up at 4am to pick up the papers from Southampton Docks station. Details of the newsagents over the following years in the village were given, until today when the Co-op is the only shop that sells newspapers and it does not offer deliveries.

Ian then explained the source of the newspaper reports. After that he and other committee members read a selection of newspaper reports from the new booklet. They started with reports from the 1700s about Hamble boats being taken by privateers, smuggling at Hamble and a Hamble-Warsash Ferry drowning.

Next came reports from each decade of the 1800s including: A boy remarkably saving a vessel after his father drowned in the English Channel; A farm arsonist execution; A shooting at the Victory Inn; The construction of a new large lobster pond at Hamble Point; The death of a shellfish merchant by a large tree branch falling on him at the Quay; A very amusing regatta event of a pig at the end of a greasy pole; A Hamble master mariner fisherman drowning at sea.

They were followed by some other fascinating reports from the 1900s: The first woman's seaplane flight in Britain at Hamble; First World War peace celebrations; A bull fight on the Quay; A magnolia tree on the Quay controversy; Novelty events at a regatta; A Hamble policeman solving a major crime; Princess Diana naming an America Cup Yacht. Finally, from this millennium the controversy and protest against the Bugle Inn redevelopment.

The highlight of the evening was the Hamble policeman, Ray Smout, who helped solve the major crime at the Manor Hotel that led to the longest fraud trial in British history, attended and spoke about his recollections of this major event. It is hoped that next year he will return to the Society to give a talk about his life as a Hamble policeman and give more details about criminal activities at the Manor Hotel.

The other report that members of the audience recollected with fond memories, were the novelty regatta events in the 1960s such the oil drum raft race, the water derby, pillow fights on a greasy pole and riding a bike along plank over the water. With the current need for risk assessments and health & safety issues many of these events would not be able to take place today.

Many more very interesting newspaper reports are included in the new booklet entitled 'Old Newspaper Reports of Hamble' describing the happenings of Hamble over the years. A very enjoyable evening and it was not surprising those attending had a different favourite newspaper report.