

Hamble Prefabs

Mention the word "Prefabs" to many older Hamble parishioners and the eyes will light up and the memories will come flooding back. New Hamble residents may not know that in 1946, fifty prefabs were erected in Grantham Close, just below Grantham Avenue (now South Court and Norbury Gardens). Each prefab was detached and most plots had fairly large gardens.

The fact that they were brand new and "modern" amazed us as children. They were centrally heated, albeit in a fairly primitive way, there was a heated towel rail in the bathroom and, the most wonderful thing of all, the fully fitted kitchen – complete with wooden draining boards – actually had a fridge! When word got around that someone had made some Tizer lollies (with sticks, taken straight from the syringa bush in the back garden), the queue stretched into Coach Road!

In winter, the living room fire heated the back boiler but somehow the heat never seemed to reach the bedrooms. Thick ice inside as well as outside the windows was a regular occurrence. The fire also provided a real challenge when we were children as it could be quite tricky to light. If the perspex in the doors of the fire were broken, the smoke would belch out into the room. However, if you left the door open and held yesterday's copy of the "Echo" across the opening, the fire usually started, starting on the "Echo" first. The phrase "fire hazard" never entered our heads. Grantham Close was a community in the truest sense of the word.

Many prefabs were empty all day with both parents at work – many at Follands – now Hamble Aerostructures, but nobody locked their back doors. We'd lost our keys, so our prefab was never locked – even when we went on our annual two-week holiday to Devon. In any case, Hookers (the baker) needed to put your bread in your bread bin, Mr Tanguay (with his horse-drawn vegetable cart) needed your vegetable rack and the rent man had to collect your book and rent money from your larder.

Many prefab dwellers moved on down into Beech Gardens and Westfield Close, but several families chose to stay. It was only when the rotten hall floorboards gave way that we moved to yet another brand new Council home. Sadly we needed both front and back door keys and there was no fridge.

Grantham Close was demolished in the 1970s and replaced by Norbury Gardens and South Court.

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Another group of eight prefabs were built in 1950 in the grounds of a large house known as Hamble House and were known as Hamble House Gardens. They were built by Air Service Training (AST), the air training school that owned the airfield, so that it could provide rented accommodation for some of its employees. These prefabs overlooked the superb sports field (now occupied by Cirrus Gardens) which was used by AST's students and staff to play games such as cricket, hockey and football.

The Hamble House Gardens prefabs were demolished in the late 1980s to make way for the Manor Farm development which includes Meadow Lane.

There are still four prefabs remaining in Hamble at Beech Close.

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