

Hamble Fire Brigade

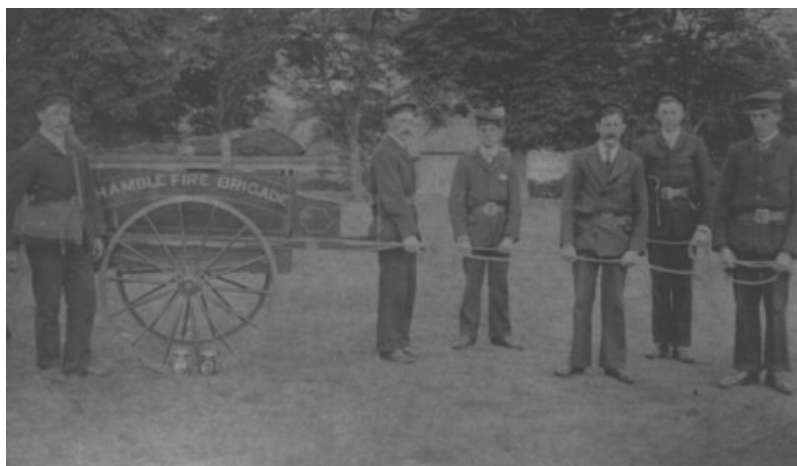
At the beginning of the 1900s there was no public fire brigade in Hamble and residents had to make their own arrangements, such as can be seen today by the lead insurance plaque above the door at Portland House in the Lower High Street. This indicated the property was insured against fire, so the private companies' brigades knew which houses they could attend.

In 1905 when the South Hants Water Company was planning & starting to install mains water to Hamble, the Parish Council made arrangements so that fire hydrants could be installed and they also decided to form a fire brigade. It was suggested that the fire hydrants be fixed at "The Quay", "The Green", "The White Hart", "St James Square", "Ravenswood Back Gate" and "Daffodil Terrace". It was found necessary to order an extra hydrant so the hoses could cover the village area and it was decided to provide another at TS Mercury.

The Parish Council sought subscriptions from prominent Hamble residents to provide funds to purchase the necessary Fire Appliances. A hand cart was purchased for £6 10s to carry the hoses & other fire equipment and a fire appliance shed was built in School Lane next to the "Gun House".

In the summer of 1906 a meeting was called to form Hamble's first Fire Brigade and eleven men handed in their names to join, with Sammy Williams being elected the Captain of the Fire Brigade.

Each following year, an 'Annual Fire Brigade Report' was given to the Parish Council and in 1908 the firemen were given permission to solicit for Christmas boxes. It is reputed that their first call was in July 1910 but it was a case of stretcher bearing rather than fire fighting.



An early picture of Hamble Fire Brigade

At the beginning of the First World War more than half the members had to leave for war duties, so an appeal was made to make up the numbers. Some members of the Rifle Club and Parish Council volunteered to bring the brigade up to full strength. During the war years the Fire Brigade continued to operate

with some necessary adjustments regarding personnel to keep it efficient and various special arrangements were agreed such as steps to be taken by the Fire Brigade in case of Zeppelin Raids.

In 1920 the Parish Council were asked to remove the Fire Station from its site and eventually a suitable location for the Fire Station Shed was offered by Mr Emmons, in the grounds of the Copse, School Lane. It was moved to the new position further along the Lane and Mr Bartlett, the farmer at Manor Farm, was asked to make arrangements for thatching the roof.

In 1926 the Superintendent of the Fire Brigade forwarded a report on a Hay Rick fire in Hamble Lane & testified to the prompt way in which the Brigade responded to "The Call". The Superintendent also drew the Council's attention to the matter that some of the employers paid the firemen in their employ their wages for time lost in attending the fire, while other employers had stopped the wages. It was decided to send letters to TS Mercury, Fairey Aviation Company, Shell Mex Co. and Messrs. AV Roe pointing out to them the voluntary services of the Brigade to the Parish and that the Council feared they would have a difficulty to maintain a voluntary brigade, unless employers in the Parish could see their way clear not to stop wages for the time lost in responding to "Fire Calls".

SERIOUS FIRE AT THE MERCURY.

**Training Ship Buildings
Destroyed.**

'Echo' newspaper headline 5th May 1930

In 1930 a disastrous fire destroyed some of the TS Mercury shore buildings in Satchell Lane. Hamble's fire cart was delayed in reaching this fire as it had to be man handled across the fields, because Satchell Lane was impassable due to main drainage being laid at that time.

Subsequent to this fire, a report to the Parish Council stated the Fire Brigade's equipment needed to be brought up to date. In fact the whole of the rubber hose was perished, most of which had seen 24 years service. A Special Parish Meeting was called and it was agreed a loan of £100 be raised to meet the cost of the renewal of the fire equipment.

Another major fire destroyed the works of Fairey Aviation at Hamble Point in 1932. As with other major fires in Hamble, such as the TS Mercury fire, the village Fire Brigade had to call for help from Southampton Fire Brigades. As Mr A Dornom, Hamble Fire Chief, said regarding the Fairey fire "As soon as we set out from the village, we could see from top of the hill that it was a job much too big for us. Calls were put through to the town Brigade."

By the end of 1935 the thatched roof of the Fire Station Shed was in poor condition and leaking badly to the detriment of the equipment. Air Service Training, the owners of the airfield, offered land for a new Fire Station opposite the Memorial Hall and a 15ft x 12ft brick Fire Station with a slate roof was built in 1936.

Under the Fire Brigade Act of 1938, the District Council was appointed the Fire Authority and took over control from the Parish Council. The District Council bought the Parish Council's fire equipment and initially decided to transfer West End's fire tender with a trailer pump to the village and arranged for plans for a new enlarged fire station to be drawn up. Mr F Morant, Captain of Hamble's Fire Brigade was asked to form a Fire Brigade for Hamble. Hamble's new Brigade was to consist of two officers and eight men.



Hamble's first fire engine.

In 1940, a tender of £1333 for the erection of a new fire station on the same site was accepted. Hamble's first Fire Engine a Bedford which towed a Dennis pump, was kept in a barn at Manor Farm until the new Fire Station was built. A Parish Councillor drew attention to the fact that no telephone was to be installed at the new station, and it was proposed to continue to rely on the generosity of Mr J H Bartlett to inform the Fire Brigade of an occurrence. This was thought to be unsatisfactory!

During the Second World War there were three full time firemen at Hamble, John Williams, Walt Austin and Chuffer Hobbs (i/c fireboat).

Lessons learned during the early air raids of the war led to a national organisation, the National Fire Service, being formed and it took over from the District Council. In 1948, control of the Fire Brigade was handed back to the County Council and Hamble became part of Hampshire Fire Service. At this time the upper floor of the Fire Station became Hamble's library.



Old Fire Station 1950

In the following years Hamble Fire Brigade continued its good work, with frequent visits to Hamble Common in the summer months to fight gorse/grass fires, as well as significant fires including St Agatha's Chapel TS Mercury (1959), Yorksey engineering works in Rope Walk (1969) and at the Petters factory (1972).

In the local government reorganisation of 1974 Hampshire Fire Service became Hampshire Fire Brigade.

The present fire station was opened in 1986 because the 1940 fire station had fallen below the expected standards in terms of facilities for personnel and equipment.

As well as improved fire crew facilities and fire appliance storage, it provided a drill yard and drill tower to the rear of the building together with an additional bay to house a small inflatable craft, capable of being towed behind a vehicle, to be used for waterborne fire fighting on Southampton Water and the River Hamble.

To better reflect its current role, in 1992, the brigades name changed to Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service.



Hamble's Fire Station

Throughout its history Hamble Fire Brigade has been very much part of the village community. A great variety of village residents have served in the brigade, including several generations of the same family such as the Williams. Hamble's firemen have taken part in village events including carnivals, fetes and charity fund raising, undertaking a range of activities from putting up celebration flags to their popular money raising attraction of 'Ducking the Fireman'.

As the fire-fighters of Hamble have done for the last century, today's fire and rescue volunteers serve us well. They are well trained to confront the many risks we face in our village, from the common domestic emergencies to the special circumstances of Hamble with its range of industries, including the oil storage & distribution depot and the wide variety of boats on the river. Our thanks go to all those who have served us in Hamble Fire Brigade over the years.