

A trip up the Hamble River in 1910

5th April 2018 - Roy Underdown Pavilion

The room was full when Ian Underdown, the Society's Chairman, took those present for a trip up the Hamble River in 1910 showing the views and villages at that time over a hundred years ago. Ian started at the mouth of the river at Hamble Point buoy and took the tide to its tidal limit. How different were the scenes compared to today with a rural open river devoted to just yachtsmen and fishermen. The most noticeable thing seen on the river trip was the large number of hards giving residents access to the river over the mudland.

The first place to be viewed was Luke's winter slips at Hamble Point with open sided sheds and boats ashore. The boats were hauled up by hand winches on wooden greasy way slipways and logs. Then over to Warsash to discover the crab and lobster trade. They were imported mostly from the West Country & Ireland, carried alive in the wells of coastal schooners and kept in ponds ashore or wooden boxes in the river called 'carbs' until they were required.

Next passed the large steam yacht owned by Mr Shenley of Warsash House and then the Hamble-Warsash Ferry, a wooden rowing boat operated by Adonijah Bevis. Ian then took a short walk around Hamble village showing the main features at that time. Interestingly he said in 1910 the Parish Council was concerned about the practice of people throwing their old pots, tins and kettles on the foreshore which gave visitors a bad impression of the place. It was agreed that people should deposit this rubbish at low water mark.

Rowing up river passed, Luke's boatyard, one of the major employers in the village, to the Training Ship Mercury to visit its shore establishment. That year Mercury boy and scout Martin Enrick was awarded the first Silver Cross in the scouts for saving a boy from drowning. Off Badnam Creek was a large battleship mast sunk in the mud and ship hulks which were part of the Boom Defence. They were to be used to connect up dolphins across the entrance of Southampton Water with wires, nets and booms for protection against enemy attack.

Moving on further up river to Swanwick and Bursledon with a large sailing collier moored off the Jolly Sailor pub with coal for these villages and then to be taken by small barges up to Botley. Ian then stayed for the annual regatta and showed the events that took place. Under the old wooden toll bridge and the railway bridge and on the right was Bursledon Brickworks with a barge loading to take the bricks away to local harbours. The bricks were transported from the brickworks to its quay by an aerial ropeway.

On the way up to Botley there was a large wreck believed to be a Viking ship from which local people had taken away wood until stopped by the Admiralty. In the last century Mr Crawshay and the Moodys from the local boatyard undertook a survey of this wreck using 'dynamite' to remove the

mud with little success. (In 1933 it was found to be the Grace Dieu, built in 1418, the largest ship ever built at that time and for the next 200 years.)

Taking the left fork of the river to Botley, Fairthorne Manor could be seen which was owned by a wealthy coal mine family who were very generous to the local community. Next passed Pinkmead Cottage reputed to be a smuggling haunt in by-gone days and once a pub called the Blue Anchor. Before Botley was a boatshed hiring out rowing boats and on reaching Botley there were wharfs on the left to supply the village with essential goods. At the tidal limit was Botley Mills that dates back to the Domesday Book.

Ian retraced the route back to the fork of the river and then took the right fork up the River Cur to the Horse & Jockey pub which was journey's end where refreshments could be taken!

Comments at the end of the meeting included what amazing pictures and scenes. I never knew that! Overall a very good talk and everyone enjoyed it.