

# My Life as Hamble's Policeman - Part 2

## 5th June 2025 - Memorial Hall

Last year Ray Smout gave a very popular talk to the Society about his life and experiences as the village's policeman during the 1970s, including some extremely humorous incidents. Ray only had time to cover some of the interesting cases he encountered while being the village's policeman, so he came back to tell more stories from his police duties in Hamble.

Ray started by giving a brief summary of how he became a policeman and was posted to Hamble. He said it was unlike any other country beat in its size and activities with its river, factories, training college, oil terminal and many pubs. As Ray could talk very well, he used this to deal with drunks and other misdemeanours and never gave parking or speeding tickets. When dealing with the village youngsters he used punishments appropriate to their misbehaviours, rather than undertaking the official process, such as clearing up the mess they had caused.

He worked by himself and had flexible hours but this meant many inconvenient out of hours calls. His wife was a receiver of lost dogs and children with a fishing hook in their hands regularly visited her to have them removed. Until he came to Hamble Ray had not faced death by himself, some in unpleasant circumstances.

Due to an interruption last year Ray was unable complete his story of dealing with the Chalmers Way village villain, Sammy McWilliams, so this was one of the first things he spoke about. Sammy was a chunky built bully and had an Alsatian dog who lived with his mother. Most people were afraid of him especially when he was drunk. The end of his crimes in Hamble came when he was charged with assault and sent to prison for 8 years. He had lifted his tiny mother above his head and threw her over a fence into next door's garden. She died 13 months later.

Ray had to undertake a pistol course and was issued with a gun because Prime Minister, Ted Heath, was a frequent visitor and needed protection. Soon afterwards, due to a bomb going off at the Old Bailey, the IRA trial was transferred to Winchester and he was deployed there on security duty for 13 weeks. He told of the various encounters he experienced there as well as his dealings with Ted Heath while at Hamble.

He became Acting Sergeant and as part of his duties he had to check the alcohol licences at the Manor Hotel. It was run by a group of Londoners and Ray became suspicious as they spent money like water. He and his wife started to investigate by taking car numbers and Ray came friendly with the barman who became his informant. His investigation resulted in the longest and costliest fraud trial in British history where the seven accused were locked up for a total of 23 years.

When interviewed by the press afterwards, they asked Ray what he expected to get out of it and he said a massive pay rise would be nice. He soon received a phone call from police headquarters who were not amused and it was said he should not repeat the interview and he should have requested a police spokesman in these circumstances. Over the years Ray's sense of humour was not shared or understood by his senior officers.

Those who were jailed were associates of cockney gangs that had connections with the Kray twins. Ray read extracts from newspapers about the Kray twins and Hamble but by the time Ray served Hamble they had been in prison since 1967.

Ray mentioned more interesting things relating to his time at Hamble such as having an air raid siren in his office in case of a Cold war incident and the acquisition of a boat to solve river crime.

One morning a fisherman arrived at the police house with a cardboard box and a skull in it that he had trawled up in Southampton Water. Ray showed his wife and children and said it would be collected later in the day. He reported it to the coroner who asked stupid questions that was obvious Ray could not know the details. To Ray's horror he then could see no sign of it, so he asked his wife who was working in the Post Office had she moved it, which she had not. Panic set in, until his children returned from the infant's school with the box. They had taken it to school to show their teacher, who left a note in it saying she had not shown it to the children as she thought it would be somewhat frightening to the five-year-olds.

Ray told other stories of similar incidents such as involving the youth club, rubbish dump and a death in Satchell Lane. In his time at Hamble, he only had one burglary at the home of the Principal of the College of Air Training.

One final incident that Ray recalled was that he was called to the College of Air Training to deal with a reported theft of money from a student's room (an Iraqi). At this time, the college was training pilots from Iran and accommodating students who were studying at the School of Navigation at Warsash. Not an ideal mix of two races that did not get on. After investigation Ray found the culprit who owed money to several students. It was decided the college wanted to keep the matter in house and the student was taken to Heathrow for a flight back home.

Ray concluded by reading out a letter from the Principal of the College of Air Training. It said I hear you are being posted away from Hamble and you have been a magnificent Village Policeman. In these days it is fashionable to kick the police, it is a real pleasure to say PC Smout has given splendid service to Hamble.

Another amusing and entertaining talk from Ray. If you want to know more about Ray's look at the lighter side of his police work, you can buy his book 'Please Spare a Copper' from Amazon, price £8.99 and the proceeds go to the Rowan Hospice.