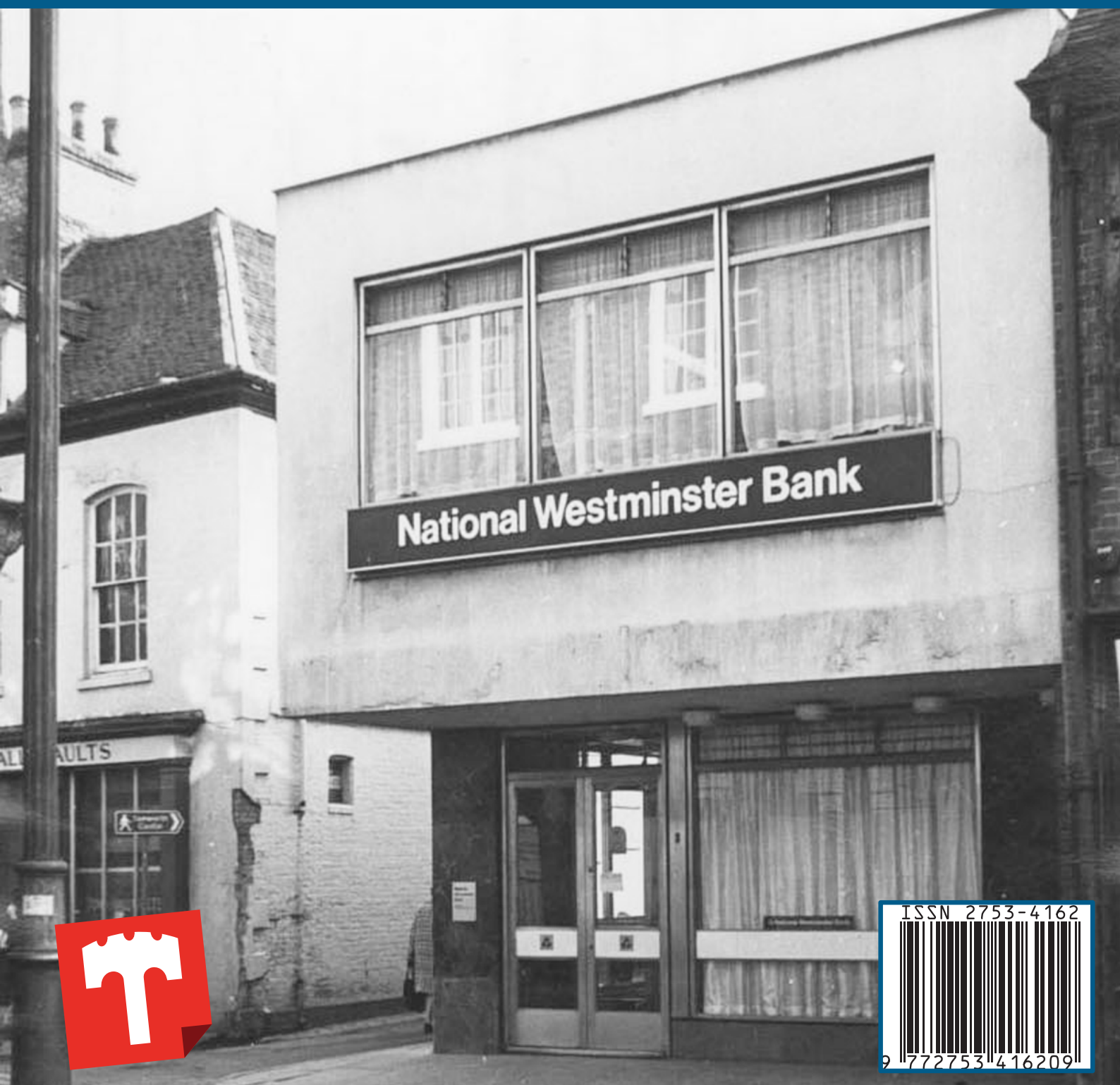


Tamworth

HERITAGE

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Preserving the Past, Recording the Present
Safeguarding the Future

Tamworth Heritage Magazine

The magazine is produced four times a year, Winter, Spring, Summer, Autumn, by Tamworth Heritage Magazine for the public with an interest in Tamworth Heritage and history.



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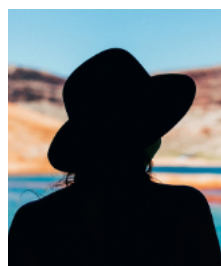
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[Tamworth Digital Archive](#).

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Deputy Editor *Could this be You?* THM is looking for an Assistant Editor to take over as Editor for Vol 6 on-wards If you are interested contact the Editor

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Tamworth Heritage Magazine Editorial Board

The Editorial board assists production of in house articles and checking of submissions.

This board currently comprises:

Dr Simon Peuple BA, PhD (History) who has held a history teaching post at Princethorpe Collage and the post of Research Fellow at Birmingham University. He has published several history books and is a former Mayor of Tamworth.

Dr Sara Read, FHEA, FRHistS is a literary and cultural historian and historical novelist [see sararead.co.uk] She is a senior lecturer in English at Loughborough University. Sara has lived in Tamworth for thirty years.

Rebecca Jewkes BA(Hons) MA(History), is a family historian passionate about social history, especially in Tamworth. She focuses on the lives of ordinary people from the 1800s onwards, capturing their voices and experiences.

Jill Gadsby of the [Tamworth Genealogy Group](#) who has access to all sorts of databases on genealogy, history and newspapers. With a background in the legal profession her research is thorough and precise.

Fred Bromwich, Vice Chairman of the [Birmingham Press Club](#), the worlds oldest Press Club and formerly the Business Editor for the Birmingham Post and Mail. Fred has written books and Articles on Drayton Manor Park and other events and issues around Tamworth.

Preserving the Past, Recording the Present
Safeguarding the Future

Welcome from the Editor

10th issue with True Stories, Found skeletons and missing artillery!



This is quite a momentous point for your Editor. This is the 10th issue and halfway in my intended 5 years and 20 issues (excluding specials and videos) as Editor. In this 56 page issue we have articles from an Accredited Museum, a Stately Home. a serious history society and a published author!

This is a 56 page issue! We started at about 34 pages per issue in volume 1, 44 pages in volume 2 and volume 3 looks like it is going to be about 54 pages per issue. Therefore we always need more articles and letters (emails) to the Editor. In this issue, as the letters (emails) came in promptly, we have been able to research some answers for them. Though not yet where Tamworth Borough Council is hiding a battery of three field guns, they received from the War Office...

As noted we are getting some serious historians and museums writing for us but we also want a lot more articles from local people about local family, local business life and anything else to do with history, heritage or people. This is the meat on the bones of Tamworth. The social history of what life was like and what really mattered to the people. More importantly this history is not recorded anywhere else.

To this end we are working on several family stories on video but the problem is not the editing and as much as the research around what is said, finding photos and checking the stories. The "skeletons" found by one building, we think due to lack of any other evidence, despite a lot of looking, was probably an animal bone pit by a kitchen rather than human bones as the story suggested.

Sometimes we have to delve into "history" to tease out facts and reality from a True Story™. Often the truth is stranger than the "true story" that has become popular history.

Actually if anyone is interested in joining our team to help with the research please email the editor. Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk This is fascinating work that can give very surprising results. All you need is an interest and be computer literate, and who isn't these days, as most research is on-line. The research will end up on the magazine, the specials or the videos we produce. No, you won't be in the videos, well not unless you want to!

This sort of research means we have connections to Museums and Archives across the Midlands and some national ones too. Recently we have visited the [Athelstan Museum](#), [Ashby Museum](#), [Magic Attic](#), [Staffordshire History Centre](#) and been in contact with others. Not to mention our own **Castle Archives**. Who have their own article in this issue.

One of the things we get involved with is researching items for people who want to find a good home for things they have. Recently we were invited to look at a Trade Union flag that turned out to be Methodist and Band of Hope banners that had been missing for over half a century. They can now be restored and added to the rest of the set in the Castle Archive.

However we don't just research for other people but things that also interest us/you. So join the team, write articles or do some research to assist the [Editor](#). You never know what you will uncover. Some of our researchers are undergraduates who find it helps on their degrees.



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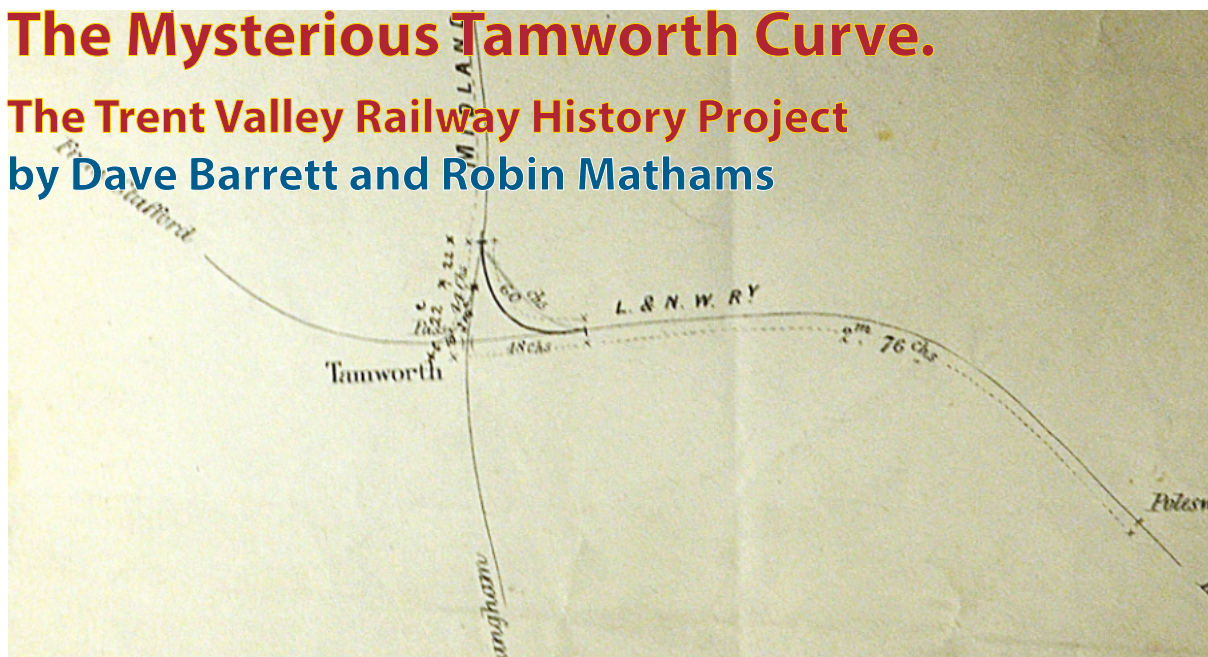
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The Mysterious Tamworth Curve.

The Trent Valley Railway History Project
by Dave Barrett and Robin Mathams



The Tamworth Curve was built under the powers of the Midland Railway (Branches) Act of 1866 to connect the Midland Railway's (MR) Derby & Birmingham line with the London & North Western Railway's (LNWR) Trent Valley line. Hereinafter it will be referred to as The Curve.

It was also known as the 'Tamworth East Curve' to distinguish it from the short chord line which connected the two railways at Tamworth station, known as the 'West Curve'. There is a belief the [East] Curve was completed and connected to the MR's line, but not to the LNWR, however, as will be seen, there is evidence which challenges this.

The following account is written from evidence from MR and LNWR archived files at the National Archives, the Midland Railway Study Centre, Derby, the LNWR Society, Ordnance survey maps, and a visual examination of the site, its topography and the Curve's remains.

Above: A diagram of distances relating to the Tamworth Curve. Dated July 1873 (By kind permission, Midland Railway Study Centre).

Below: An aerial photograph of Tamworth Station taken in 1928 showing the short West Curve chord line on the left, connecting the LNWR Trent Valley line with the Midland Railway. The Trent Valley line runs from bottom left to top right and the MR crosses it at a right-angle. The buildings on the lower right are goods warehouses with their loading bays clearly visible.

(Britain from above EPW024629 ENGLAND (1928))



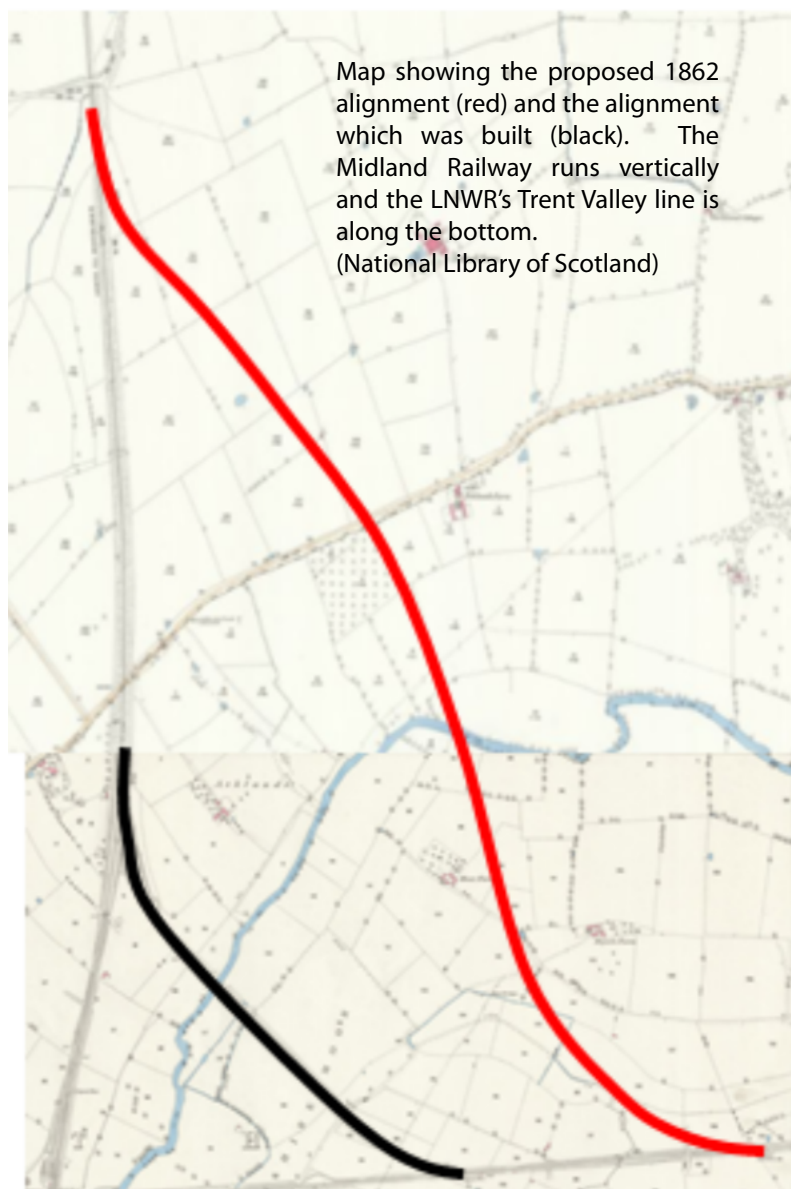
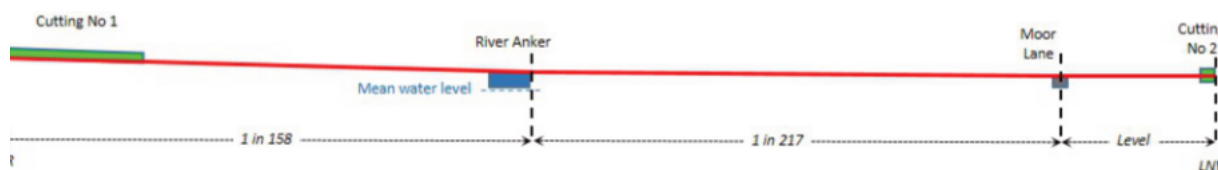
All measurements are in the following imperial units, as used by the railways (even today):
 1 chain = 22 yards.
 1 furlong = 10 chains (220 yards).
 1 mile = 80 chains (8 furlongs).

THE CURVE – A PROFILE

The Curve (as specified in the 1866 Act) was 64 chains (1,408 yards) long across Warwickshire Moor to the south of Tamworth Station and climbed from the LNWR's Trent Valley line to the higher level of the MR line, it was double-track throughout.

The LNWR Curve junction was at Bole Hall, 109m. 35 chains from Euston which was 48 chains (1,056 yards) south of the MR over-line bridge at Tamworth Station, and its junction with the MR line was 48 chains (1,056 yards) east of its Tamworth (High Level) Station. The LNWR line is level from the Bole Hall Junction site to the River Anker bridge then rises approx. 5ft to the MR over-line bridge, giving a total rise between the LNWR and the MR rail levels of 25ft.

The MR's original plan for the Curve, dated 1862, a copy which resides in the LNWR Society archive, was for a line connecting with the



Map showing the proposed 1862 alignment (red) and the alignment which was built (black). The Midland Railway runs vertically and the LNWR's Trent Valley line is along the bottom. (National Library of Scotland)

LNWR 770 yards further south (at milepost 109) and with the MR just east of the Syerscote Lane over-line bridge near Wigginton, 1m 48 chains from the station. This proposed Curve was 1 mile 5 furlongs and 5 chains long.

The Curve's earthworks as built comprised an embankment and a short, 15 chains (330 yards) curved cutting where it approached and joined the MR line and a shorter, very shallow cutting where it left the LNWR line. There were two culverts for flood water, and two underline bridges for occupation & footpath purposes, one being for Moor Lane.

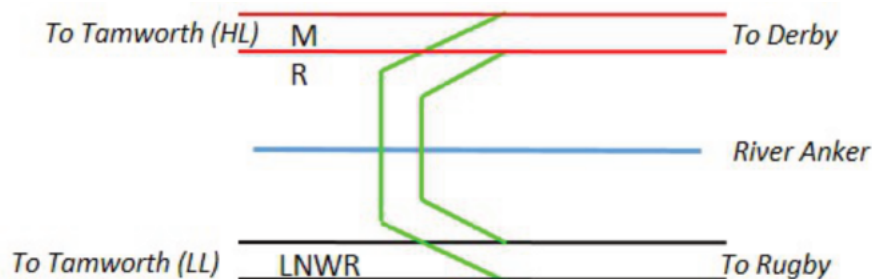
The River Anker was crossed by a masonry viaduct. From our measurements and other known data we have calculated the line gradient profile with an assumed 5ft river bank height to give the River Anker bridge a 12ft clearance above the mean water, the same as the LNWR line bridge. This diagram shows the calculated gradient profile.



LEFT: An Ordnance Survey map published in 1884 showing the embankment and the cuttings, the River Anker viaduct, the underline bridge for Moor Lane (circled red), the underline bridge for a footpath (circled blue), and the culverts (red and blue lines). It also shows the LNWR signal box and signals including a post for a signal to release trains from the curve to the LNWR Up line. There is no sign of the MR's junction signal box. The 1901 revision no longer showed the LNWR signal box. Today, there are some remains of the Moor Lane Bridge and the north culvert. (OS 6 inch map Warwickshire IISE, 1882/3 – National Library of Scotland).



LEFT: An early Google Earth image which shows the imprint of the alignment as a discolouration in the field (upper left) and the vegetation near the LNWR Trent Valley line (lower right). The surviving culvert is marked red as is Moor Lane Bridge of which one wall survives. A trace of part of the footpath under the blue-circled bridge can be discerned. The area between the MR line and the blue-circled footpath bridge is now The Perry Crofts housing estate.



Schematic diagram of the Curve and the two junctions

THE ACT OF PARLIAMENT

The MR Board, at its meeting on November 1st 1865, gave its authority to obtain an Act to build the Curve and the resulting Midland Railway (Branches) Act of July 30th 1866 laid down; 'A railway, six furlongs and four chains or thereabouts in length, to commence in the Parish of Tamworth in the County of Warwick by a junction with the main line of the Midland Railway, and to terminate in the Parish of Tamworth in the same County by a junction with the Trent Valley line of the London and North Western Railway.'

John Crossley, the MR's engineer, prepared the specification and costings for the submission of the Bill to Parliament of which this is a summary;

Earth-moving 168,000 cu. yds. (cuttings & embankments)	£3,374
Bridges, culverts, drains & streams	£1,656
Permanent Way	£4,028
(rails) inc. fencing & 2 junctions	
Contingencies	£906
Land	£1,744
Total costs:	£11,708

CONSTRUCTION PROJECT MANAGEMENT

A minute of the MR Co. Board meeting of October 6th 1869 stated; 'Tamworth Curve: That the construction of this curve be permitted to the South Construction Committee' of which the Tamworth Curve Construction Committee (TCCC) was a sub-committee formed to manage the project. The TCCC comprised MR directors and managers and the engineer in charge of the project was John Crossley. Its first meeting was on November 2nd 1869 and its last recorded meeting was on 3rd June 1873. The TCCC minutes reside in the National Archives, Kew.

PURCHASING THE LAND

Charles Sandars was appointed Land Agent at the first TCCC meeting held at Derby. He had to agree high land prices which he explained in a letter to the TCCC dated February 26th 1870; 'I have purchased all the land on this branch except Mr Neville's; being close to Tamworth Station and some of it let to a market gardener makes the price high. I have given £300 per acre - £350 and

in one case as high as £400 per acre".

The engineer later reported that all the land would be in the MR's possession by May 16th. The total of Mr Sandars' agreed purchase prices paid was £3,355 including his fees, which exceeded the Parliamentary estimate of £1,744 by £1,811 - more than double!

CONSTRUCTION

At the first meeting of the TCCC Mr Crossley was instructed to obtain tenders for the construction work and the civil-engineering contractor I. D. Tomlinson's price of £8,998 was accepted. Brick suppliers contracted were Benjamin Gregory of Sheffield, J.H. Baylies of Tamworth, William Elverson of Stapenhill, and William Bond.

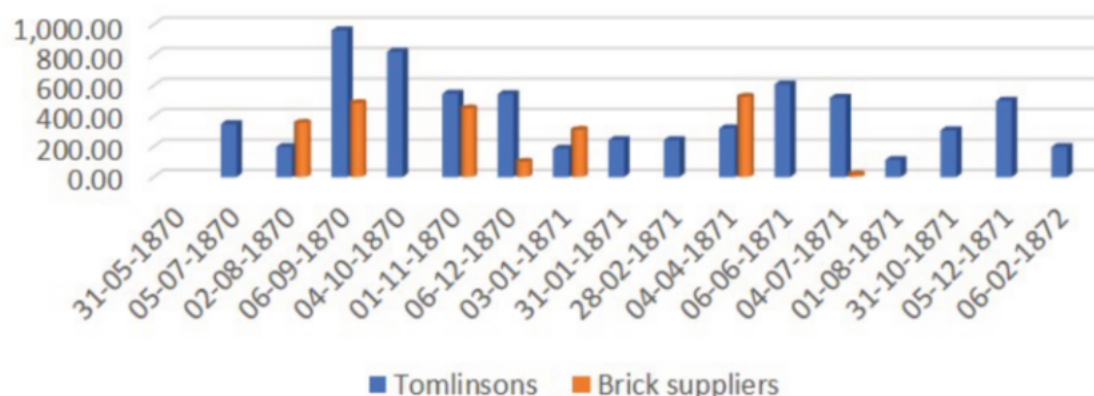
At the TCCC meeting of July 5th 1870, Mr Crossley reported that construction had started, including the River Anker viaduct, work on one footpath bridge, and that 1,600 yards of the 2,300 yards of fencing had been erected. He further reported on August 2nd that; "...the work has been carried out with a great effort...the cofferdam for the River Anker has been made and holds well and all the brickwork will be above flood level before October".

Thereafter he reported the progress regularly and on September 30th he reported the culverts were complete, but in the case of the River Anker viaduct; "...the foundation of the second pier is nearly down, but as the excavations have to be taken 12 to 14 feet below the bed of the river to reach the marl rock, the work has been somewhat increased", this unforeseen extra work would have increased the cost.

Mr Crossley continued to report on progress which continued at a regular pace, but in January and February 1871 his reports stated work was scaled back and the reason was probably the weather - according to the parish records of Bingham, Nottinghamshire, the winter of January & February of 1871 was particularly harsh.

Work continued during the rest of 1871 with the minutes recording regular payments being made to Tomlinson during that year and the last recorded payment for the supply of bricks being made to J.H. Baylies on July 4th 1871. By January 1872 the Curve was complete apart from the junction with the LNWR at Bole Hall for

PAYMENTS TO TOMLINSON AND THE BRICK SUPPLIERS



which the LNWR was contracted by the MR to build for a price of £1,179. The foregoing may well have given rise to the belief that the Curve was never connected to the LNWR.

This histogram shows the payments made to Tomlinson (blue) and the brick suppliers (orange) between July 1870 and February 1872, reflecting the level of construction activity during the project and showing a dip during the harsh winter of January/February 1871. After a delay in building the Trent Valley junction, the Curve was ready to open for traffic in May 1874.

From the engineer's reports, the total amounts of construction work (civil engineering) undertaken were; 74,000 cubic yards of earth-moving, 2,300 yards of fencing, 927 cubic yards of masonry and 4,013 cubic yards of brickwork. The amount of track-laying was never reported but would have amounted to 1mile 48 chains of track along with the double-line junctions with the MR and the LNWR.

THE ACTUAL COSTS

From the authorisations of payments recorded in the TCCC minutes, the total expenditure on the Curve was £14,895 made up as follows;

£6,652 paid to Tomlinson,
 £2,244 to the brick suppliers,
 £3,555 for land purchase,
 £1,274 for fees and sundry items
 £1,179 paid to the LNWR for the cost of laying the Trent Valley line junction.

The total expenditure of **£14,895** (£1.5m today)

exceeding the estimated cost of £11,708 by £3,187 (26%) including the higher-than-anticipated land costs.

WAS THE CURVE COMPLETED AND CONNECTED TO THE LNWR?

Some people over time, have maintained the Curve was completed apart from being connected to the LNWR, one possible source of this view having been outlined earlier, however, there is evidence which establishes the connection was made and this is now outlined;

Point 1.

On July 16th 1872 - five months after Tomlinson's final payment - Mr Baker (MR Engineer) had written to his colleague, Mr Crossley "...stating that before the junction at the London & North Western end can be commenced, the sum of £1,170 being the estimated cost of the junction, be deposited with the Secretary of that company, and also that the amount of easement on the London & North Western land be agreed." The meeting ordered the payment to be made and on July 18th the LNWR Permanent Way, Works and Estate Committee (PWWEC) authorised the junction work to proceed. The wording of Mr Baker's letter and the TCCC meeting minutes verify the intention to have the junction built by the LNWR, and as will be seen, it appeared to have been completed by September 1872. The TCCC's last recorded meeting was on June 3rd 1873, suggesting the Curve's construction was completed by then and one month later, on July 7th, Midland [Railway] Notes and Parliamentary Diagrams recorded the Curve being ready to open.

Point 2.

The minute of the meeting of the LNWR PWVEC on September 19th 1872 read; 'Tamworth New Curve. Erect signals, Midland Coy's cost', which indicates the junction point work was complete.

Point 3.

Midland Railway Co. diagram of the Tamworth Curve.(see left)

Point 4.

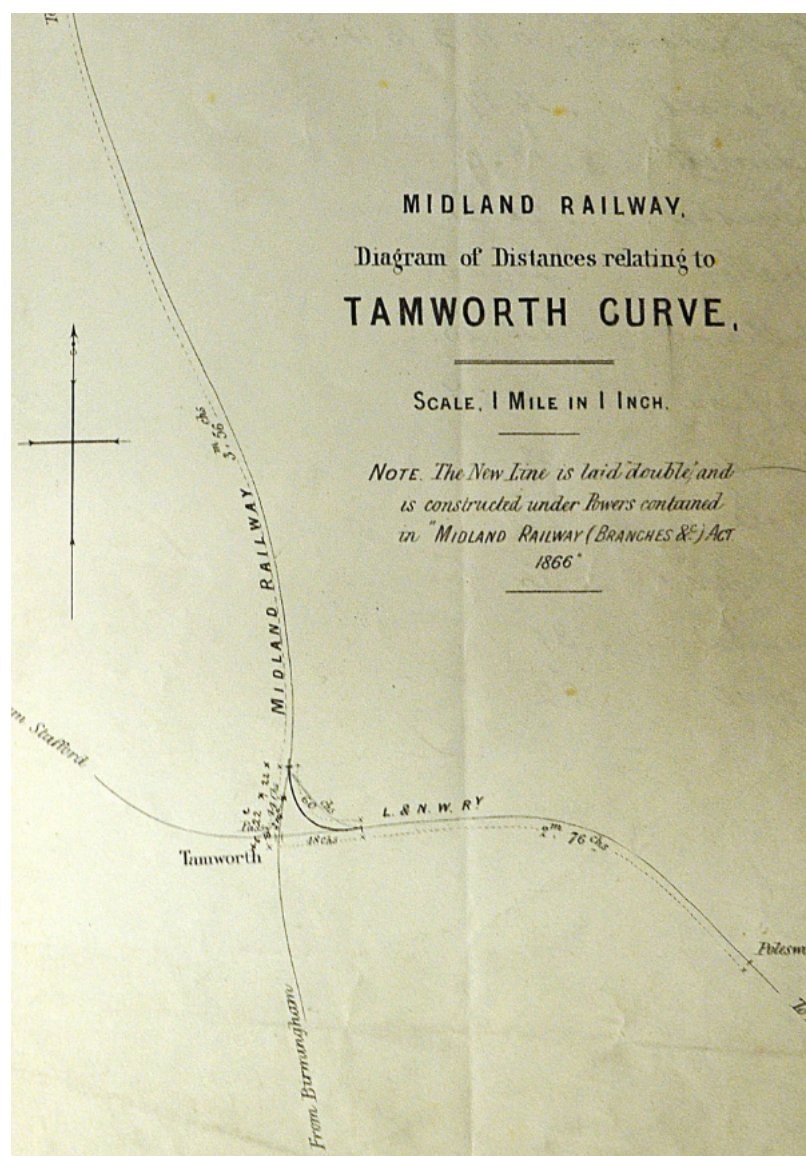
On June 2nd 1874, the Railway Clearing House (RCH) Order No. 713 (LNWR Distance Tables) and Order 714 (MR Distance Tables) changed the name of the West Curve junction (at the station for the chord to the MR) to; 'Tamworth North Junction' and added the new 'Tamworth South Junction' (for the Curve) but Order 713 also contained an addendum slip which stated: 'The opening of Tamworth South Junction has been anticipated, therefore the distances for that junction, printed on Circular 714 must not be acted upon until further notice.' (our emboldened emphasis). The tables and the wording of the addendum slip are taken as evidence the LNWR Junction was complete and the Curve was ready for use.

Note: The Railway Clearing House was formed in 1842 to manage the allocation of revenue of railway companies. Later, it became the regulatory body overseeing the the day-to-day running of the UK's railways and setting common standards for railway companies. It was dissolved in 1955.

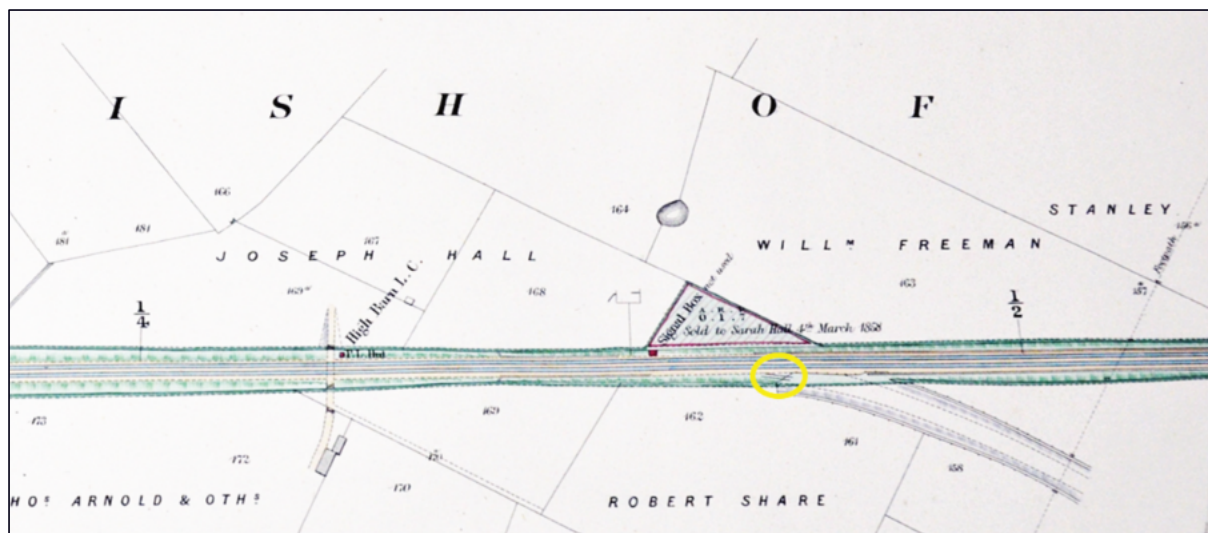
Point 5.

In the MR's New Lines Register, there is an additional entry made in 1887 which reads; 'Tamworth Curve to LNWR. Ready for opening May 1874 but never opened'. Further proof the line was connected to the LNWR.

Was the Curve connected to the LNWR? The foregoing evidence clearly establishes it was, however, it had a very short life and was never brought into use.



Above: A diagram of distances relating to the Tamworth Curve. Dated July 1873, it is annotated; 'The new line is laid double and is constructed under the powers contained in the Midland Railway (Branches &c.) Act 1866'. It shows the curve's length of only 60 chains, the MR Junction 48 chains east of Tamworth Station, and the LNWR Junction 48 chains south of the Midland bridge over the Trent Valley line at Tamworth Station. Crucially, it shows the Curve connected to the LNWR - evidence that the LNWR Junction was built. (By kind permission, Midland Railway Study Centre).



DEMOLITION

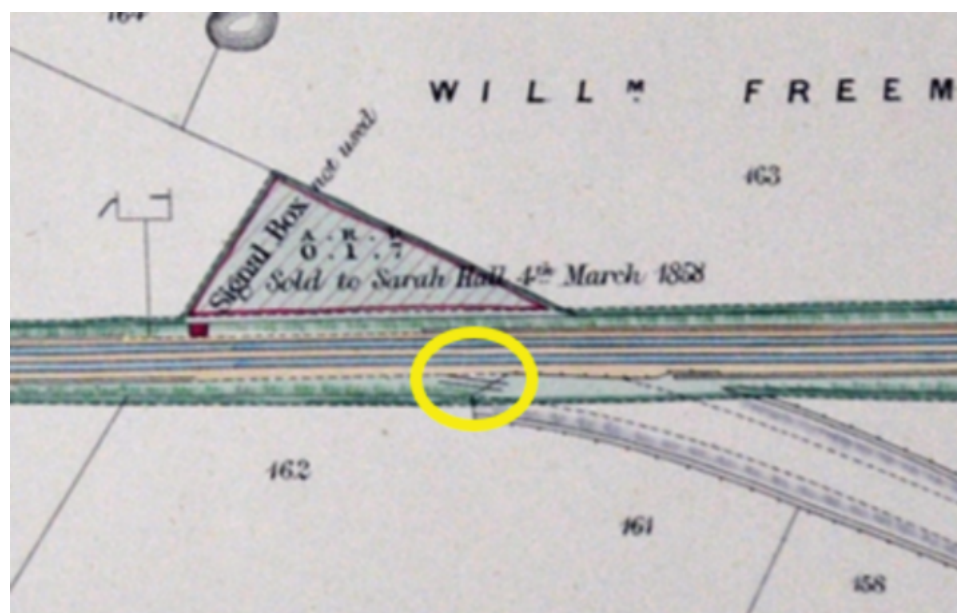
By mid-1873, shortly after the Curve was completed, moves appear to have been afoot to dismantle it and the event which probably sealed its fate was the opening of the alternative MR/LNWR Ashby-to-Nuneaton Joint Line in August 1873 giving both companies good access to the north-west Leicestershire area from Nuneaton.

In March 1874, the MR asked the LNWR to agree to lift the Curve's rails, which the LNWR refused – because the MR was refusing a similar (tit-for-tat?) request for a curve at Nuneaton, as described in a minute of the LNWR's Special Committee of 2nd July 1874: 'That the Midland Company do not concur in the suggestion to take up the Rails of the Nuneaton Curve which they are about to make use of. The suggestion that the rails at the Tamworth Southern Curve should be taken up was declined also.' As far as the LNWR was concerned, the rails were to remain. The MR notes and the Parliamentary Diagrams stated the rails were removed and the two junctions dismantled around 1878. However, the 1883/4 Ordnance Survey shows LNWR signal box

still in place as well as the junction signalling, and the 1938 Ordnance Survey maps show the signal box dismantled, but the rest of the Curve's structures and the embankment still in place.

At a later date, all the bridges except the River Anker viaduct, and the embankment were dismantled and the north culvert opened up. There is some local opinion that the embankment material was recycled and used in the construction of the River Tame flood relief channel at Broad Meadow. The River Anker viaduct was reportedly demolished in the 1960s by the Royal Engineers using explosives.

The LNWR's Trent Valley Line asset survey published in 1880 (extract reproduced below) shows the following;



- *The Curve's earthworks, without rails and no LNWR junction.*
- *The LNWR junction signal box on the down side of the main line, marked 'not used'.*
- *The Down line Curve junction signal.*
- *A small remnant of the Curve's up line which is highlighted yellow, the LNWR down line junction signal and the signal box are also shown.*

The Asset Survey was accurate because its purpose was to identify land purchased and unused by the Railway to be sold back to the landowners.

THE MR JUNCTION SIGNAL BOX

The MR's Tamworth Curve Junction signal box, according to some commentators, was opened circa January 1873 and whilst this was likely, no evidence has yet been found to verify the date. As to closure and demolition, the minutes of the MR Way and Works Committee's meeting of January 6th 1880 read: 'That a block post be established between Haselour and Tamworth...by the removal of the present box from Tamworth Curve Junction'. From this evidence, the MR signal box had a life of only 7 years!



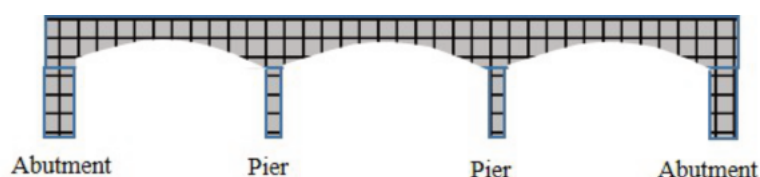
The 6 inch Ordnance Survey of 1882/3 (below) shows the Curve's up line stop signal for the LNWR junction (dark blue), the LNWR Up line stop signal (red), the LNWR Down line junction approach signal (turquoise) and the LNWR signal box (green), all still in position but with the Curve's tracks lifted. Note, the LNWR Asset survey is orientated opposite to the O/s map. (National Library of Scotland).



THE RIVER ANKER VIADUCT

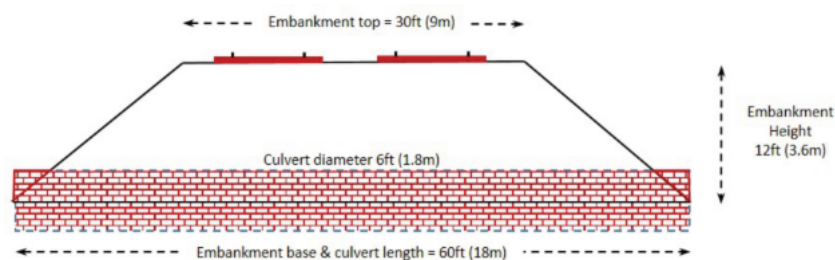
This was a substantial structure. In his reports, Mr Crossley refers to 2 abutments and 2 piers, the abutments being the supporting walls at each end and the piers supporting the arches in between which indicate the viaduct had three arches (see below). This photograph of the Trent Valley Railway viaduct over the river at Tamworth gives some idea as to

what the Curve viaduct could have looked like, the clearance is around 12ft above the river level and the rail level approximately 15ft as would have likely been the case of the Curve viaduct. As outlined earlier, it was reportedly demolished in the 1960s by the Royal Engineers.



REMAINS - THE NORTH CULVERT

The north culvert for flood water, highlighted red on the OS map and the Google Earth image, was a brick structure 6ft wide and approximately 60ft long. It would have originally been closed (like a pipe) and was eventually opened out. This diagram from known data and measurements shows the cross-section of the embankment and culvert.



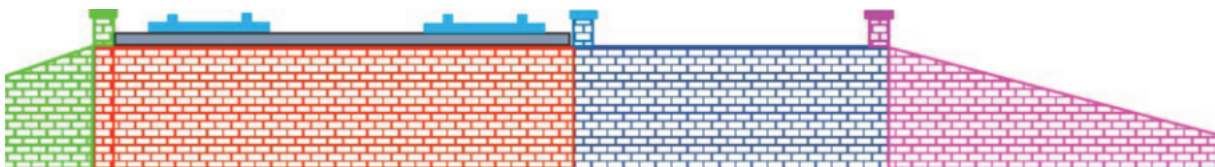


The remaining brick walls and curved base in the water are visible in the photograph.

REMAINS - MOOR LANE BRIDGE WALL

This is circled red on the OS map and Google Earth image. That the bridge was built later in the project was revealed on October 31st 1871 in Mr Crossley's report;

"One bridge to build near to the junction with the North-Western over the Moors Road". The remains reveal an interesting design of bridge wall as shown below.



A diagram of the remains of the Moor Lane bridge wall constructed from measurements with the sections coloured for clarity. The width of the supporting wall (orange) for the deck was sufficient for two tracks. The other wall section (blue) was 14ft wide, for a siding or loop line? The top of the west wing wall (pink) sloped, and was also inclined inwards. The pilasters marked green and pink are missing as is the eastern section of wall (green).

The bridge deck may have been either a single cast-iron plate or steel girders. The clearance height above the lane is 7ft and the remains of the lane are now a footpath.



Moor Lane Bridge – South wall

Left: Part of the supporting wall, marked blue on the facsimile. Right: close-up of the low-height end pilaster and capstone (black on the facsimile) for the west wing wall (pink).



THE REASONS FOR THE CURVE AND ITS ABANDONMENT

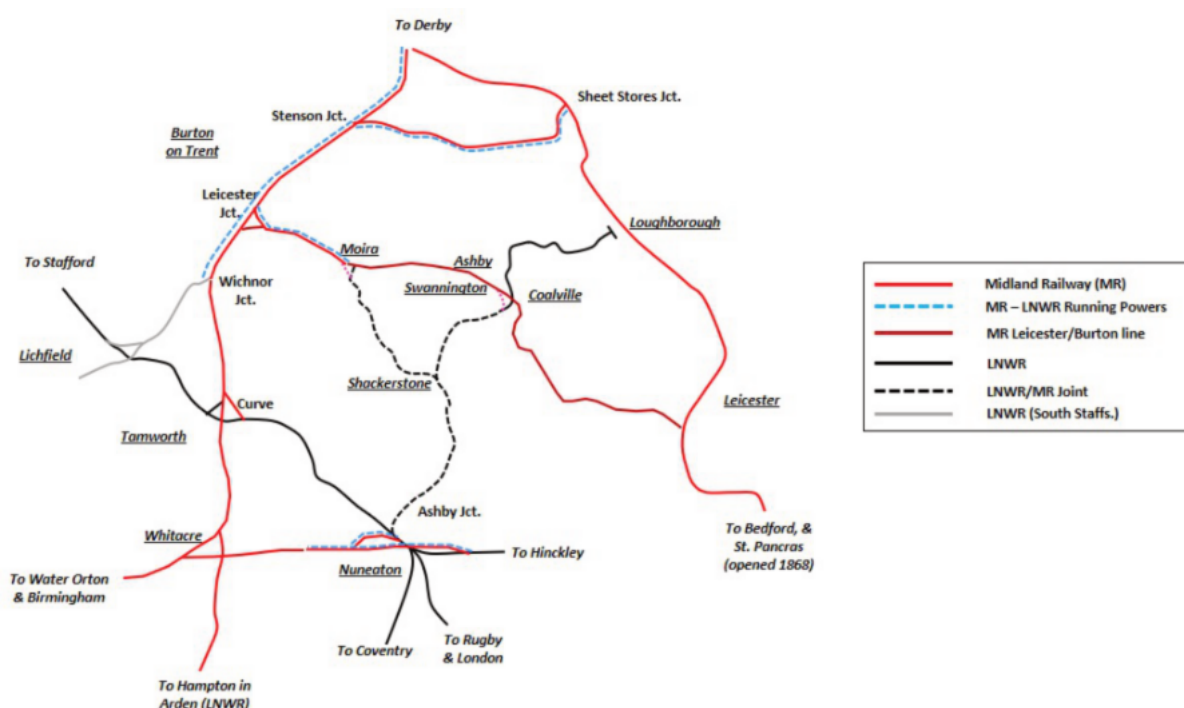
From the evidence found so far, details of the construction of the Curve have been established and that it was finished and ready for opening, with both junctions installed. However, the reasons for building it and its subsequent abandonment, which could well have been related, remain frustratingly obscure despite extensive searches for evidence in both MR and LNWR Company archives. There follows some facts which could have had a bearing on the Curve.

To assist understanding, this diagram (by kind permission of the Midland Railway Study

Centre) is of the railway system in the area in 1873 and for clarity not all lines are shown. It illustrates how the Curve (in red) appeared to be unnecessary and rendered redundant by the new MR/LNWR Ashby-Nuneaton Joint line (dashed black).

The sections of the MR lines over which the LNWR had running powers granted in 1869-70 are shown dotted blue.

Although the diagram date is 1873, the LNWR Charnwood Forest branch (from Coalville to its terminus in Loughborough) of 1883 has been added, for interest. Note: 'Running powers' is an agreement by a railway company to allow another company's trains to use its lines.



THE MIDLAND RAILWAY'S BUSINESS CASE

The so-called Stonebridge Railway from Whitacre to Hampton in Arden, part of the Birmingham & Derby Junction Railway, was opened in August 1839 to provide a key section of the route from Yorkshire and the North Midlands to the London & Birmingham Railway. There was also the Midland Counties Railway (MCR) linking Nottingham, Derby and Leicester to Rugby, also opened in 1839 and in 1844 it merged with the North Midland Railway to form the Midland Railway.

The former MCR line gave the MR a better direct access to the LNWR at Rugby for London traffic. After the formation of the MR, the Stonebridge Railway lost its strategic importance and effectively became a minor branch line.

Was this the catalyst for the Curve? A replacement of the Stonebridge Railway to provide the MR with an alternative link to the LNWR, which, in addition to London and the south, would, via Nuneaton, afford access to Coventry and the Great Western Railway at Leamington?

By the 1860s the MR had access to Burton upon Trent and mineral-rich north-west Leicestershire by way of its Burton & Leicester line (coloured brown). This line enabled traffic to be routed to London and the south by joining the MR main line at Leicester, instead of the former MCR line to Rugby. Also, by joining the Birmingham-Derby line at Burton enabled MR traffic to be routed to Birmingham and the South West.

In 1868 the MR improved its access to London by opening its line from Bedford to St. Pancras thus no longer having to rely on the LNWR for access to Euston (and the Great Northern Railway for access to Kings Cross).

These events would appear to have made the Curve superfluous unless it was decided a link to Coventry and Leamington via Nuneaton, was still desirable.

In 1866, The MR Board authorised a Bill to be laid before Parliament for an Ashby to Nuneaton line for more direct access to the LNWR at Nuneaton, and because the LNWR had put forward a similar proposal there was an argument between the two companies with them eventually reaching a compromise in that the line would be built and operated jointly – it became known as the Ashby & Nuneaton Joint Railway (A&NJR), the joint Bill receiving Royal Assent on June 25th 1868

Furthermore, in 1873, the line from Stenson Junction (east of Willington) to the MR Main line at Sheet Stores Junction (near Radcliffe on Soar) was completed which gave the MR an additional route to its main line from the Birmingham-Derby line over which the LNWR had running powers.

As these developments must have weakened the case for the Curve and assuming the MR was aware of this, why, on November 1st 1865, did it authorise the Curve to be included in its 1866 Branches Bill? And as construction of the A&NJR began in August 1869, to open on August 1st 1873, why did the MR press ahead with construction of the Curve anyway?

This all begs the question; did the MR want the Curve for one of the reasons outlined above or for some other obscure reason?

As events unfolded which appeared to weaken the business case, is it possible the MR made an almost unlikely mistake in allowing it to be

included in the 1866 Branches Bill? Or after including it in the Bill it then changed its mind, but too late to withdraw it?

If so, did the MR then decide, having procured the 1866 Act, that it was cheaper and more convenient to complete the Curve to conform to the Act then demolish it, rather than going to the extra bother and expense of obtaining another Bill, required under the Abandonment of Railways Act, to abandon.

In April 1869 The MR had presented a Bill (which failed) to abandon the Settle & Carlisle line and the risk of another embarrassing failure in the case of the Curve may have been a factor.

Whichever, the opening of the A&NJR, co-incidental with the finishing of the Curve, appeared to have been its death sentence anyway - completed, but never to open!

THE LNWR'S BUSINESS CASE

So much for the MR, but what of the LNWR? In the mid. 1860s there was much negotiation between the two companies concerning goods traffic, particularly beer, from the Burton Area for which the LNWR had running powers over the MR's line to Wichnor Junction, near Alrewas (dotted blue on the diagram), to give it access to its main line at Lichfield via the South Staffs. Railway.

However, in June 1870, there was a downturn in beer traffic from Burton, which would have weakened any business case for the Curve, and it could be the LNWR then lost interest.

CONCLUSION

In the absence of firm evidence - in spite of extensive searching - there remains opportunities for further speculation because the questions persist as to why the Curve was built in the first place, and why it was completed, connected and then abandoned without opening for traffic.

There are few remains of this waste of money, its sole legacy being one of the culverts still doing its job. The saga of the Curve is not unique; for example, the Hinckley to Stoke Golding Branch built around the same time as the the Curve was also not opened despite petitioning from local residents – but that's another story...

References

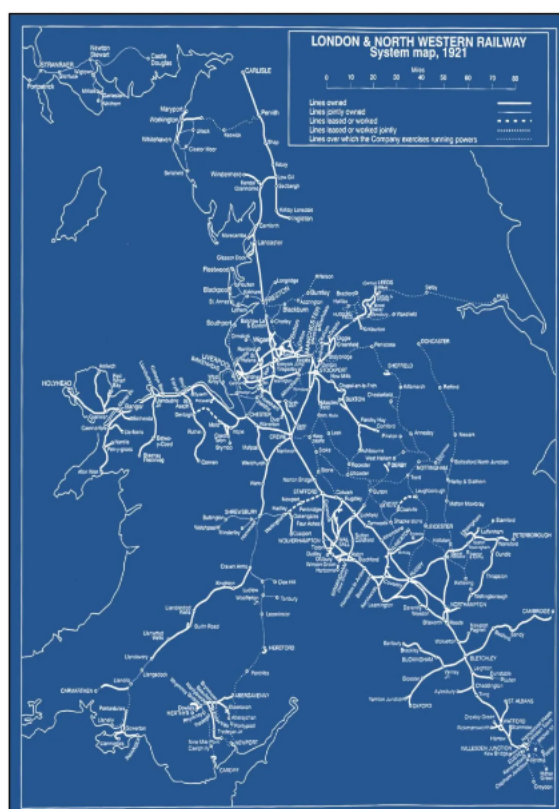
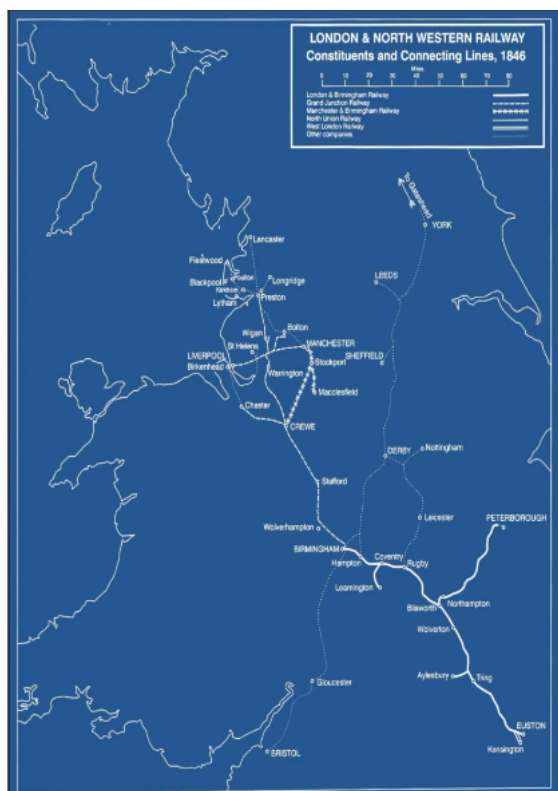
National Archives, Kew
RAIL 491/321 – MR Tamworth Curve Construction Committee minutes
RAIL 491/191 – MR Board and other committees. Minute 8097 of MR Main Board dated October 6th 1869
RAIL 491/101 – MR Way and Works Committee minutes. Minute 2833
RAIL 1070/89 – Estimates for MR Branches Act 1866
MR Branches Act 31st July 1866 - 29 & 30 Victoriae. Cap. ccxcviii – Vol. 4 Page 4461
RAIL 410/59 – LNWR Running powers
RAIL 410/306 & 307 – LNWR Permanent Way, Works and Estate Committee minutes
LNWR Society – Map of first proposal for a Tamworth Curve (1862)

Ordnance Survey 6in. & 2.5in maps - Staffordshire & Warwickshire (National Library of Scotland)

Our thanks to the Midland Railway Centre, Derby for its interest and assistance.

The Authors

Robin Mathams and Dave Barrett are joint historians of the Trent Valley Railway History Project with the aim of researching the history of the entire line – from Stafford to Rugby – on which they have been working for the past 15 years. They are keen railway enthusiasts and members of the [LNWR Society](http://lnwr.org.uk), and have had articles published in the Society's Journal. They also give illustrated talks to both railway and local history societies. <https://lnwrs.org.uk/>



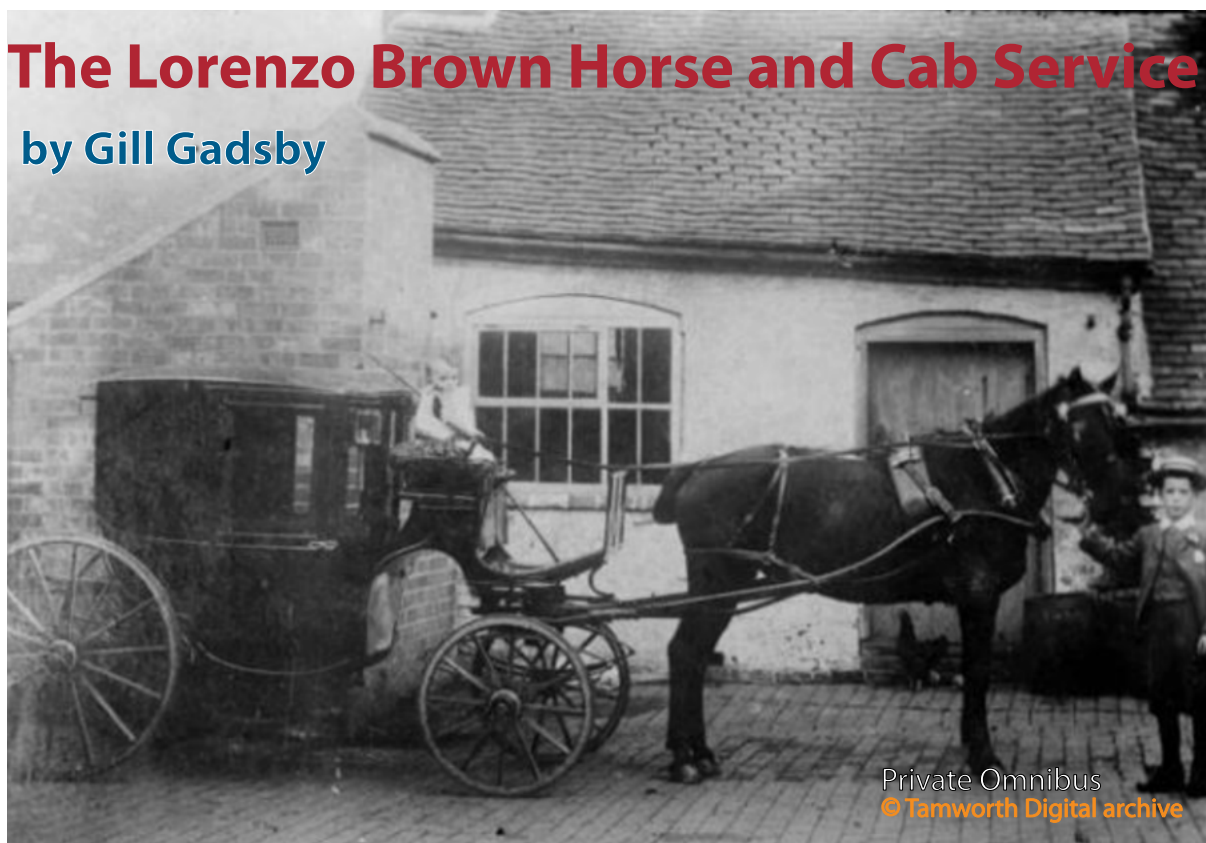
Editors Note:

Had both the east and west curves been finished and kept along with both the Tamworth goods yards, after rail nationalisation and Beaching cuts, Tamworth would have become a significant rail centre and junction connecting two major main lines and two networks in England. The maps above shows the LNWR in 1846 and the final network in 1922.

Pondering on this the Editor would like to do a THM Special on: **Tamworth and the Railways**. As we have had several articles on this already. If anyone wants to write any article, or letter to the Editor on the local railways, and the things connected, e.g The Station Cafe, life on or around the railways and interconnected services using the trains then please contact the editor Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk

The Lorenzo Brown Horse and Cab Service

by Gill Gadsby



This is the story of the people behind a local taxi firm in the late 1800s when it was still horses and carriages. It is interesting because nothing is in isolation: This story touches on the pubs, local industries, the people and their movements. People and their lives were not as static as people often imagine and there are so many links to other things.

Lorenzo was born in Dudley in 1855. He was the son of John & Sarah Brown. John was a Lancashire coal miner, Sarah was originally from Coventry. So people did move, and in many cases considerable distances across several counties. Lorenzo grew up in Hammerwich, just east of Burntwood and some 15 miles west of Tamworth, where, in 1870, aged 15, he followed his father down the mines. It should be noted that mining was a major industry around Tamworth. In fact in 1965 about a tenth of the population were still miners. Daw Mill closed as late as 2013, less than a decade ago. Birch Coppice, by the M42 Junction, closed in 1986 leaving its spoil heap as the only landmark. Though there were also the Peel, Kingsbury, Pooley, Baddesley, and other pits in the area.

[Editors note: In 1978, when Birch Coppice pit was still operational, the Editor stood on the Birch Coppice spoil tip, the hill that is still visible today,

The horse & carriage in the photograph belonged to Mr & Mrs Lorenzo Brown who ran a regular horse & cab service between Fazeley & Tamworth c1880-1900. The children are unknown but it is likely they were Lorenzo's children as it would be normal for them to help in the family business.

when working for NCB Research. The plan was to find a use for the mine-stone that the tip was made of. We found a use for the spoil but events overtook our endeavours and both the pit and the uses we found disappeared before we could implement the scheme. Birch Coppice Burliness Park still has its landmark]

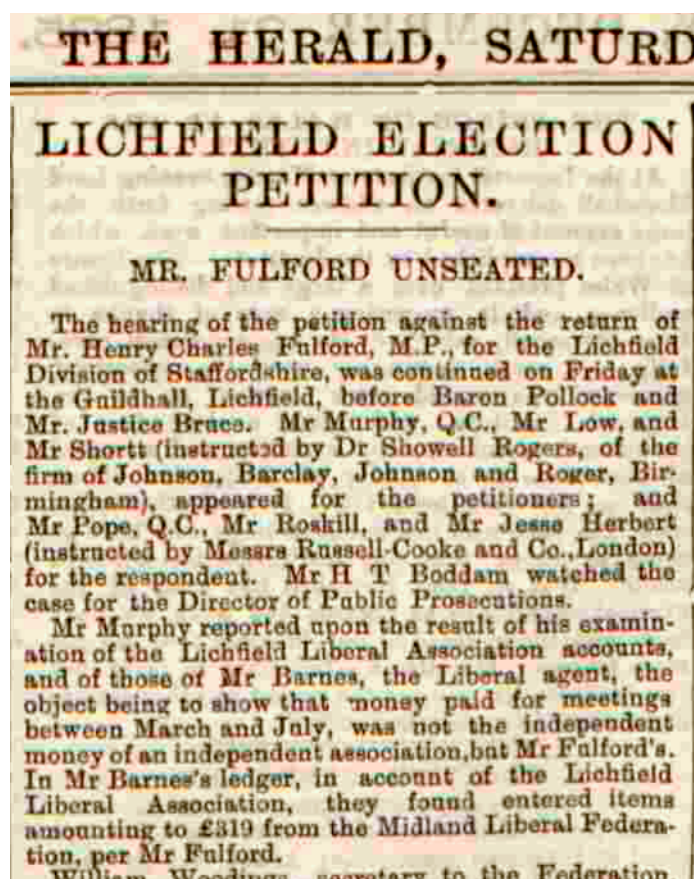
In 1875 Lorenzo married Mary Ann Macklin born in Fazeley in 1857. She was the daughter of John & Hannah Macklin. John was also a coal miner and the family lived in Brook End, Fazeley. Following their marriage Lorenzo and Mary also lived at Brook End.

At this time Lorenzo was still working in the mines. Mary's mother had died but her father and siblings lived nearby. The couple had thirteen children in total but, as was not uncommon at this time, only six survived infancy.

Their daughter Hannah Brown married Stanley John Mitchell, the brother of Henry Charles Mitchell the local stonemason in Tamworth who had a keen interest in the history of the town. Chas Mitchell, as he was called wrote the seminal book "Tamworth Parish Church" a must for all Tamworth Historians as it follows on from the two Palmer books on Tamworth.

By 1895 Lorenzo was hiring out a horse and carriage to take folk from Fazeley to market in Tamworth. His occupation was described as miner and carrier. It was at this point that he was involved in a scandal surrounding the election of H C Fulford as Parliamentary Representative for the Lichfield Division. The scandal was in relation to bribery, treating, intimidation, personation ("to assume the identity of another person with intent to deceive"), illegal payments and illegal hirings. Lorenzo's was called to give evidence with regard to the hire of his horse and carriage, which carried 8 to 10 people, to take folk to Lichfield on Election Day. Other notable names from the area were also named in the newspaper report.

It should be noted that cases like this have led to the UK's very strict rules on political campaigning; political expenses and what can and cannot be done during an election period as many of you will know when talking to Tamworth Councillors mid-march to the end of April in the run up to the Tamworth Borough Council Elections. Other local and general elections have the same rules.

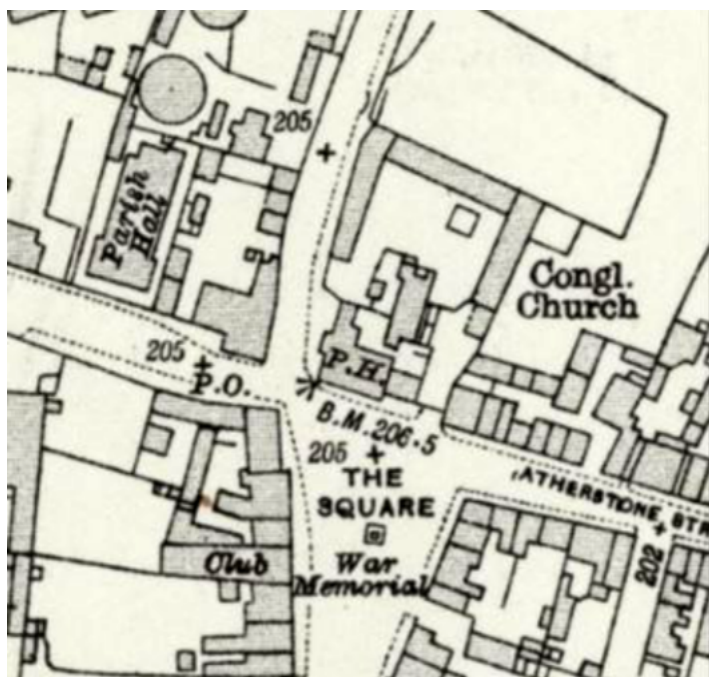


By 1899 Lorenzo had become the landlord of the Red Lion Inn, Fazeley and was employed by the James Eadie Brewery as the Tenant.

The Red Lion Inn stood on the dangerous corner of Lichfield Street and flush up to Tamworth Road, (where the car park beside the Parish/Town Hall is now). The Red Lion was just 10 yards away from The White Lion Inn, across the road, which also stood on the square at Fazeley,

Fazeley Village square
© Tamworth Digital archive



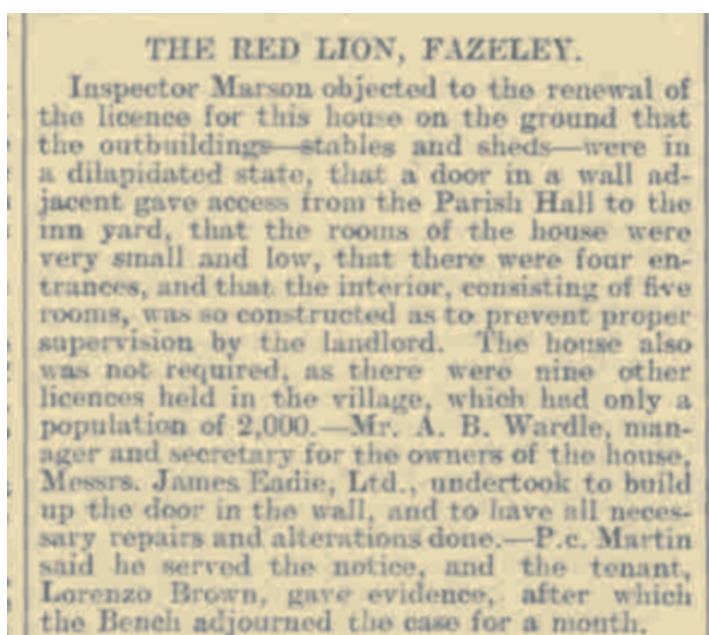
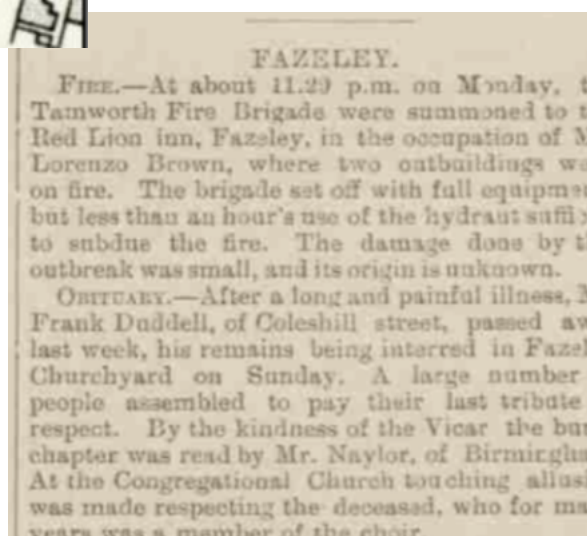


now replaced with a block of flats. Try as we might this is the only image we can find of the Red Lion and it is hidden behind the war memorial in the square! The pub you can see clearly is the White Lion (for which there are many photos). The clock tower of the Parish Hall can be seen above the roof of the building to the left of the Memorial

The family were living at Red Lion on the day that the 1901 Census was taken. A Tamworth Herald report dated 14 Feb 1903 stated that Police Inspector Marson objected to renewal of the licence of the premises on the grounds that "the outbuildings, stable and sheds were in a

dilapidated state, a door in the wall adjacent gave access from the Parish Hall to the Inn Yard, the rooms of the house were very small and low, there were four entrances with the interior consisting of five rooms which prevented proper supervision by the Landlord" He also stated that the Inn was not required as there were 9 other licences held in the village with a population of 2,000.

Make of it what you will but, on 3 October that same year the Tamworth Herald reported a fire in two outbuildings at The Red Lion Inn, damage was reported to be small but origin of the blaze was unknown!!



The licence must have been granted in 1903 as Lorenzo was back in court in March 1906 to renew it. An objection was again raised by a PC Martin on the grounds that the stable adjoined the larder of the house, but he accepted that since the last renewal application repairs had been carried out. In 1906, within a radius of a 1/4 mile there were five other licensed premises. Fazeley had 328 inhabited houses, 207 were within the 1/4 mile radius. The population at the time was 1,887.

It was stated that Lorenzo's business had paid to Eadie's Ltd the sums of £357 for beer, £143 for spirits. The trade in tobacco, cigars etc raised £65, and mineral waters a further £60.

A Brake Carriage



A single Private omnibus



Lorenzo ran a large carriage business and possessed 3 brakes, 2 omnibuses, a cab, 2 dog carts, a luggage cart and 6 horses.

It appears that the granting of the licence, or not, was based on the following, Eadie's giving up two licences one on the Navigation Inn and one on the King Charles in the Oak, both in Fazeley, the rebuilding the Three Tuns, the rebuilding the Red Lion but on a smaller footprint to allow for widening of the junction of Lichfield Street and Tamworth Road, repairs to other houses and the building of 140 new houses, the construction of which would be down to Messrs. Eadie.

The Committee decided to refer the licence to the County Compensating Committee on the grounds that the Red Lion was not required and was structurally unsuitable.

By 1907 Lorenzo had moved to the White Lion Inn across the road in Fazeley Square but, in 1911 an advertisement for the sale of his carriages, busses etc appeared in the Tamworth Herald. It should be noted that in 1911 the Herald was also carrying for sale notices for gents and ladies bicycles and motor vehicles. The time of the horse drawn convinces was starting to wane and Lorenzo was now in his 50s.



Dog cart © Tamworth Digital archive

Navigation Inn Fazeley. Possibly with one of Lorenzo's carriages waiting outside. © Tamworth Digital archive



The license for the White Lion was temporarily transferred to A Wardle, managing director of Messrs. Eadie due to Lorenzo's ill health and other matters, possibly a court case involving himself & his daughter Eliza following a fight at the White Lion.

Mary Brown died aged 54 in 31 January 1912. Lorenzo married again on 30 December 1923. His bride was Elizabeth Ellen Lakin.

Unfortunately, the marriage was to be a short one of 7 years, as Elizabeth died on the 18 June 1930. The couple lived at Rockingham Fields Farm, Hurley. Lorenzo passed away on the 16 December 1935 aged 80.

At the time of his death Lorenzo was still living at Rockingham Fields Farm.

Lorenzo's body was interred at St Paul's Church, Fazeley, next to his first wife Mary. Perhaps his marriage at 68 to Elizabeth, a decade after Mary's death was purely one of convenience and companionship. Is there is more of a story to uncover for those who wish to look?

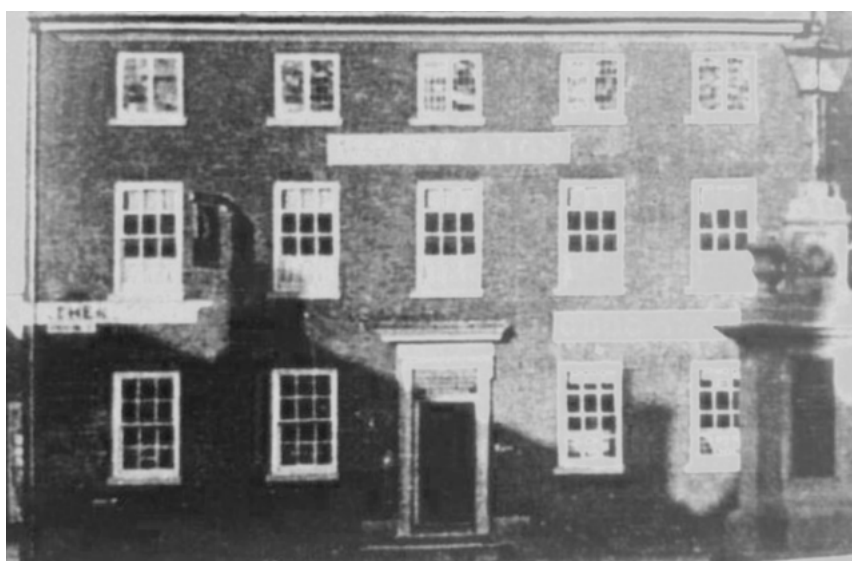
White Lion, Fazeley
© Tamworth Digital archive

UNDER A DISTRAINT.
WHITE LION HOTEL, FAZELEY.

MESSRS. LOWE & COLBOURNE will SELL BY AUCTION, on the above premises, in the occupation of Mr. Lorenzo Brown, on TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5th, 1911, the Whole of the JOB MASTER'S STOCK, FARM IMPLEMENTS and EFFECTS, comprising 2 Nag HORSES, Capital Brougham, Three Brakes, Three Station Busses, Bentwood Side Trap, Capital Float, Three 4inch. Carts, Light Lorry, Mowing Machine, Horse Rake, Single and Ridge Ploughs, Chain Harrows, Chaff Machine, Rick and Cart Sheets, Ladders, 4 Sets Double and Single Harness, Two Sets Thiller Gears, etc.

Sale at 1 o'clock prompt.
Catalogues on application.

908



This season's significant dates and events

collated by The Editor



1 April 1889 - from today Tamworth is wholly within Staffordshire.

10 April 1983 - birth of Jemma Palmer, businesswoman, model, and wrestler who appeared as Inferno in Gladiators

11 April 2023 - Broadmeadow becomes the sixth of Tamworth's nature reserves

21 April 1910 - Tamworth's skating rink is opened by the mayor (Mr T. Lowe) in Market Street

4 May 2017 - 51 of the 62 seats contested in the Staffordshire County Council election won by Conservatives

7 May 1920 - birth of Colin Grazier in Two Gates, Tamworth

8 May 1996 - Brian Jenkins, MP for Tamworth, makes his maiden speech in the House of Commons

9 May 2019 - death of Mickey Steele-Bodger, animal vet and rugby union player

10 May 1694 - death of John Swinfen, elected MP for Tamworth in 1659

3 June 1897 - National Telephone Company open an exchange in George Street, Tamworth

6 June 1910 - fire at Birch Coppice Colliery, none injured but production halted for three weeks

10 June 1935 - Palace Cinema rebuilt and reopened in George Street

12 June 1981 - birth of Dave Gilbert, Tamworth-born snooker player

13 June 913 - Aethelflaed, Queen of the Mercians, dies in Tamworth.

19 June 1949 - four pictures slashed by person or persons unknown in Tamworth Castle

21 June 1887 - Reverend William MacGregor announces his retirement due to ill health

22 June 1949 - death of Thomas Appleby Matthews, Tamworth-born musician and conductor

23 June 1959 - Old Bell Inn closed for the final time

30th June 2012 Olympic Torch can to Tamworth

New artefacts at Tamworth Castle

by Mrs. Sarah Williams,
Castle Museum Collections and Archives Officer



Tamworth Castle 1930s
© Tamworth Digital archive

Tamworth Castle is very excited to announce a number of new additions to its displays! These loaned artefacts will be at the castle this year and next but are not permanent, so come and see them whilst they are in Tamworth Castle!

to its home location, previously on display and held in safe keeping by Birmingham Museum Trust, it is now on loan to Tamworth Castle for the next 3 years, and can be seen in the Saxon Gallery.

The Castle has reopened after the winter closure with a fanfare including a new half term offer of story-telling depicted in a number of rooms, and a big reveal of new displays to an audience of invited guests which included the Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire, Sir Ian and Lady Dudson, the Deputy Lieutenant Mr Lee Bates, and the Mayor of Tamworth.

Top of the list of new displays is the long-awaited and much requested *Glascote Torc*. The Iron Age gold alloy collar, has finally returned

Editor's note: Having seen this in the Castle, the photo does not do this 18cm (7 inch) Torc justice. It is a fantastic piece to see in its exhibition setting.



Glascote Torc,
© Birmingham Museum Trust

Transactions of the Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society (1969) reported on the Torc like this:

THE TORC from Glascote (Plate I) [Editor, see picture on previous page] was found about 1943 by Mr. S. G. Bates and Mr. G. E. Croshaw, who were employed in a boat-building yard by the Coventry Canal between Glascote and Amington, about half a mile south of Tamworth (fig. I) 1. In February 1970, Mr. Bates wrote about his find to Ipswich Museum after his wife had read an account of the gold torcs found at Ipswich in 1968. At the request of Miss Owles, Assistant Curator of Archaeology, he sent it to Ipswich, and the Curator, Miss P. Butler, then took it to the British Museum.

Mr. Bates' account of the discovery, in a letter of 12 March 1970, to the Keeper of the Department of Prehistoric and Romano-British Antiquities at the British Museum, is as follows:—

"It was during the war that the torc was dug up, about 1943. I was foreman of a boat-building yard situated in the centre of a field by the Coventry Canal between the villages of Glascote and Amington and about half a mile from Tamworth. I was continually improving the yard and it was during the digging of a trench to convey waste water from the workshop to the canal with some workmen that the torc was discovered. I washed it in running water from the tap and the sandy soil fell away leaving the metal as you see it today. I sent it to our main office that was then in Birmingham but they did not seem to be very interested and sent it back to me with a message that I should keep it as a souvenir and it has been in my home ever since. Miss Owles has asked me in her letter if there is any chance that there are any more torcs in this area but I don't think so as I got the workmen to dig around for quite a distance from where it was found as at that time I thought it was the handle from a coffin and expected to find about three more. I understand that the boat-yard is not now in existence but the outer walls which were of brick are still standing".

Mr. Bates and Mr. Croshaw also recalled in their evidence at the Coroner's inquest at Tamworth in May 1970, that the torc was "found about twenty feet from the edge of the canal, and that the damage to the wires at the back of the collar was caused by the spade at the time of discovery".

Other evidence showed that an excavation was not worthwhile because the site was criss-crossed with foundations and pipes from the old boat-yard, and

that there was reason to think that the torc was not from the bed of the canal, as the spoil from the canal appeared to have been dumped on the far bank".

The maximum diameter of the torc is approximately 18 cm. (7 in.). The diameter of the twisted wires together is approximately 1.5 cm. (0.6 in.). The maximum diameters of the loop-terminals are, (a) external: 2.3 cm. (0.8 in.); internal: 1 cm. (0.45 in.). The weight of the torc is 454 grammes (1 lb.).

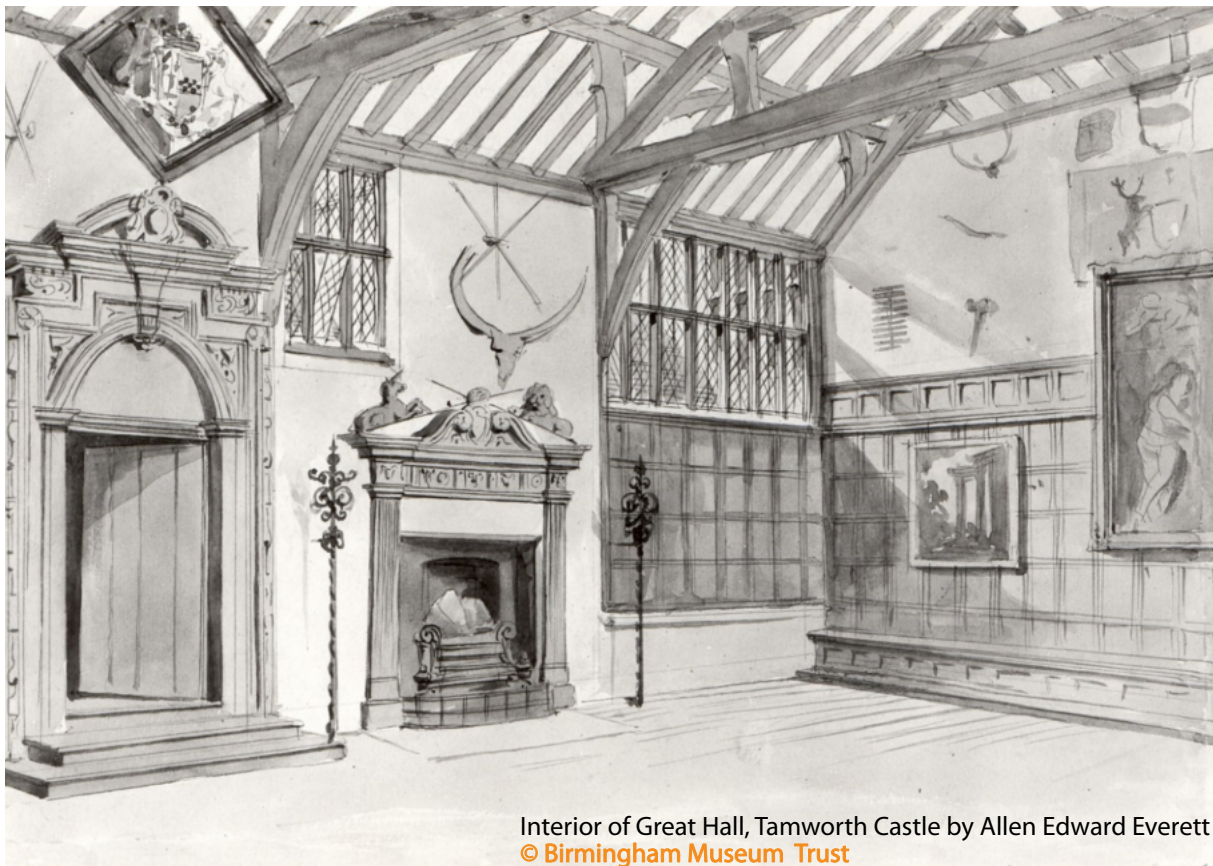
The torc is composed of twelve wires twisted into six pairs. The six pairs are themselves twisted about a central hollow core, and onto the ends are cast two loop-shaped terminals. Two punched wavy lines ornament the terminals and divide each terminal into three segments. Every segment thus received the ends of four wires, in two pairs. The end of one of the wires is not attached to its terminal and examination under the microscope at the British Museum Research Laboratory showed the cavity to contain rootlets and corrosion products of the metal, indicating that the wire has been loose from antiquity and that probably the wire was not wetted by the molten gold when the terminal was cast and did not adhere to it. Consequently, when the binding wires were removed the end of the gold wire sprang out of its socket. Analysis of the metal of the torc showed that it is 29-8% gold, 41-9% silver, and 27-2% copper.

This composition accounts for the large number of micro-cracks on the surface of the metal, which indicate that the metal is fragile and that it was strained to its limit in the course of manufacture. The failure in the casting of one of the terminals onto the wires and the fragility of the metal make it unlikely that the collar was considered by the craftsman to be satisfactory for delivery to his customer. In this sense the torc is analogous [very similar] to the two major hoards from this country, from Ipswich and Snettisham, which both contain incomplete pieces, and appear to be from royal workshop treasuries."

In comparison to other Torcs that have been found, Tamworth's Glascote Torc stands out as being one of the best!

In addition, there are **18 previously unseen pieces of Staffordshire Hoard now on display.**

These are new loans from Stoke-on-Trent and Birmingham Museum Trust adding to the Saxon Gallery visitor favourites like the pommel caps and the tiny garnet decorated eagle heads that have been retained by popular demand.



Interior of Great Hall, Tamworth Castle by Allen Edward Everitt
© Birmingham Museum Trust

The small gold sheet and copper alloy die stamp owned by Tamworth Castle that were local metal detector finds also remain on display.

For those with more of an art interest there are 3 new paintings on display in the Castle.

Two watercolours are on loan from Birmingham Museum Trust by the Victorian artist: Allen Edward Everitt (10 April 1824 – 11 June 1882) or A. E. Everitt as he is usually known.

Everitt was an English architectural artist and illustrator. A leading artist in the Birmingham area between 1850 and 1880, his work is a valuable historical record of local buildings of that period.

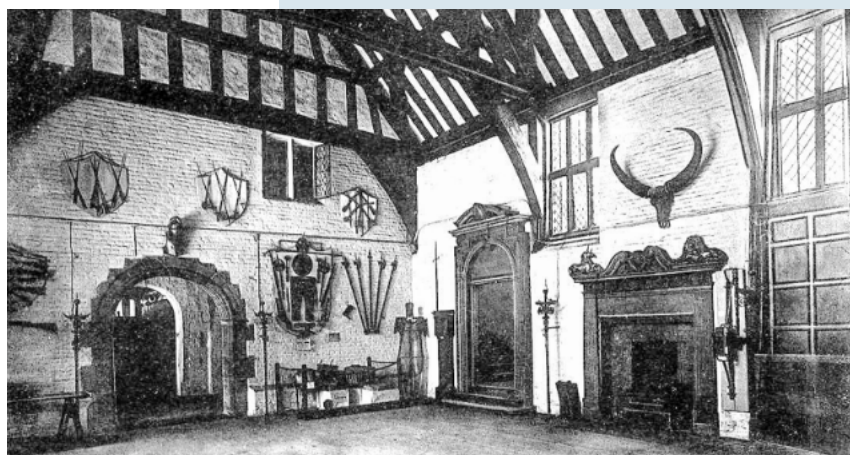
One watercolour shows *the Great Hall*, and the other the shows *the Oak Room* as they would have been in the 19th century. Both paintings can be seen in their respective rooms over the next 3 years.

Great Hall, early 1900s
© Tamworth Digital archive

Image in black and white for illustration purposes only.

The watercolour shows the Great Hall as it would have been in the 19th century. Note the different position of the Townshend family death hatchment, shown here over the South stair's door, now over the panelling on the back wall. Artist: Allen Edward Everitt (10 April 1824 – 11 June 1882) or A. E. Everitt as he is usually known.

Everitt was an English architectural artist and illustrator. A leading artist in the Birmingham area between 1850 and 1880, his work is a valuable historical record of local buildings of that period.



Finally, the Day Parlour is the location for a rolling programme of paintings to be displayed from the Castle collections. A different painting will be displayed every few months based on a seasonal and event theme. The first painting to be displayed in this new location is 'A View of St Editha's Church and The Old Paregoric Shop, Tamworth' 1856 see next page.



View of the Oak Room Showing the Fireplace & Carved Overmantle. Watercolour on paper. Typed To Front & Back: 'Tamworth Castle'. Inscribed on the back: 'The Oak Room'

Specialist conservation cleaning was carried out on the carved overmantle in 2023.

Oak Room Fireplace, Turn of the century
© Tamworth Digital archive

Below Video of Tamworth Castle, [click here of image to view](#). Note this does not include the current displays.

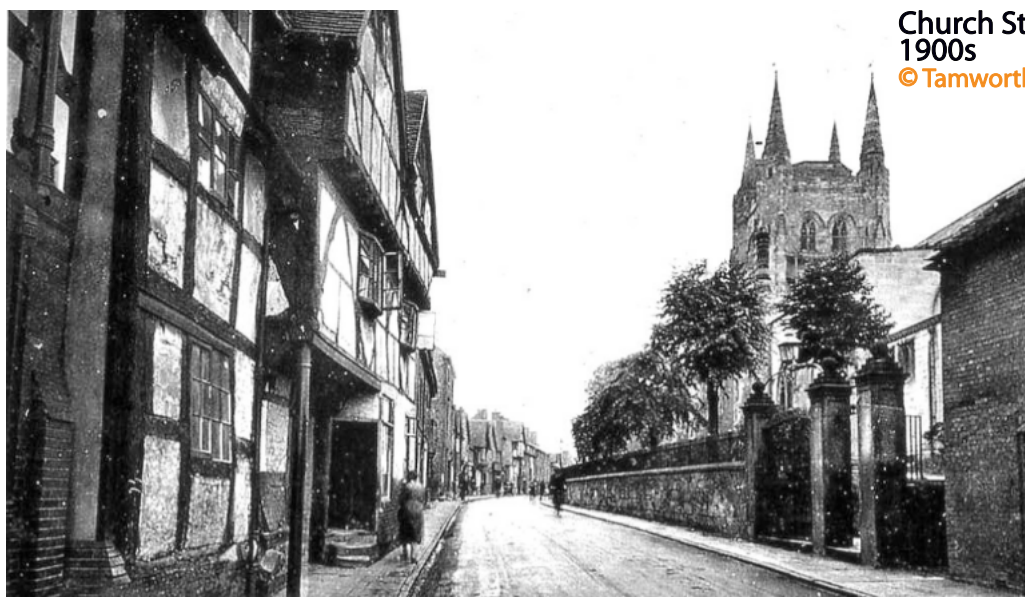




'A View of St Editha's Church and The Old Paregoric Shop, Tamworth' 1856

By the artist Henry Lark Pratt (1805 - 1873).

It shows St Editha's Church on one side with the Old Paregoric Shop on the other, and a shepherd driving a flock of sheep up Church Street. It is an apt reminder of the constantly changing landscape of Tamworth's town centre as the new college building and the renovated St Editha's square are revealed.



**Church Street early
1900s**

© Tamworth Digital archive

Doorway to Tamworth

Where is this doorway in Tamworth? Each issue will feature a door in Tamworth town Centre. Some will be well known, some historic, some vaguely familiar, like this unmarked door. Have you knocked and entered?



Last Issues Doorway:
Main door to Town Hall, Market Street

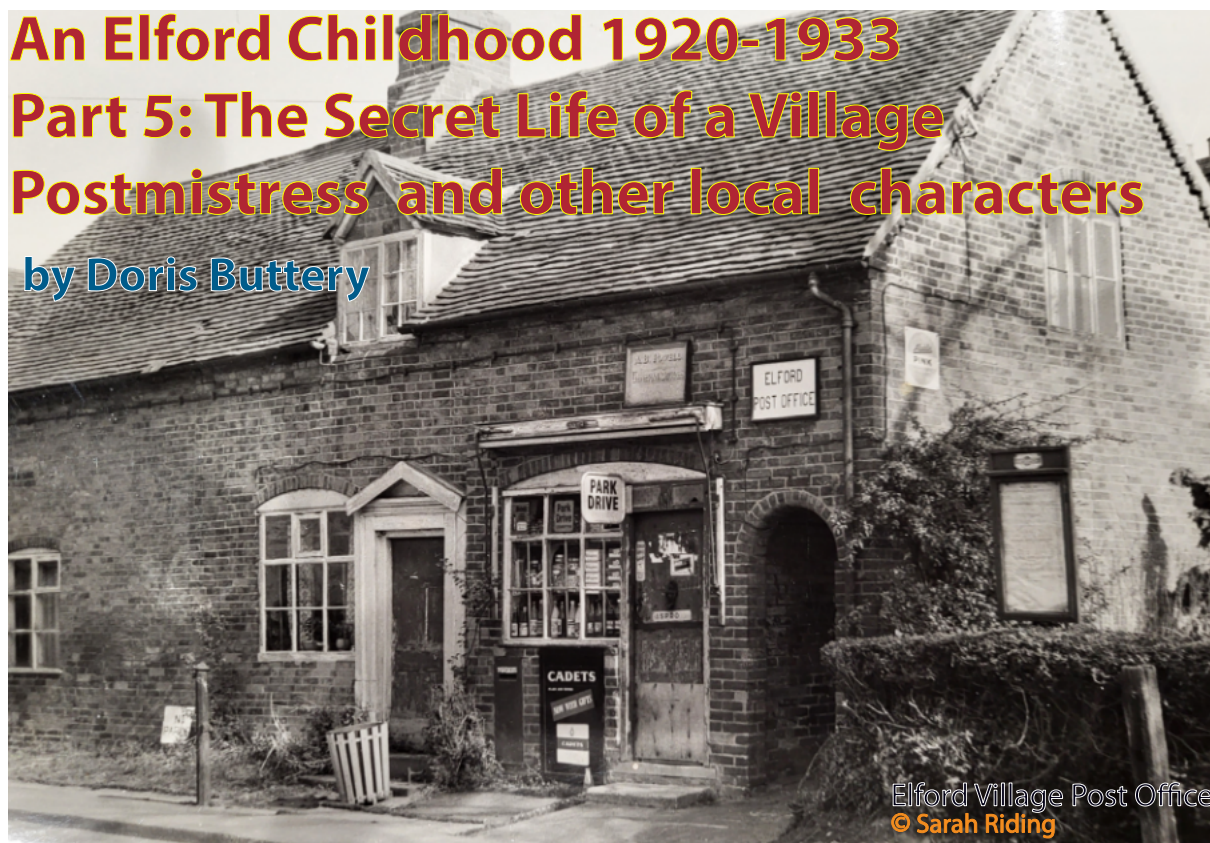
Photo © Jameela

An Elford Childhood 1920-1933

Part 5: The Secret Life of a Village

Postmistress and other local characters

by Doris Buttery



Elford Village Post Office
© Sarah Riding

Doris lived with her family – two older brothers, Bill and Frank, and her parents Jack and Lizzie – from her birth in 1920 until they moved away in 1933. It was a world far removed from the one in which we all now live.

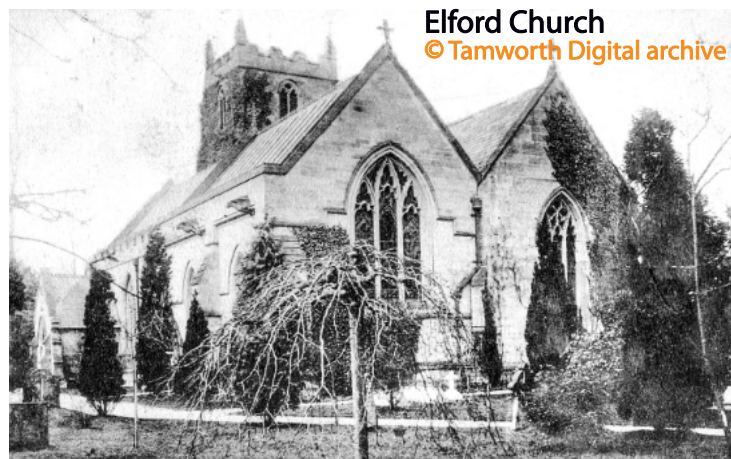
The postmistress was a forbidding, elderly woman called Miss Sharp. She was tall, with iron grey hair scraped back into a bun, and gold-rimmed pince-nez perched on her - rather pointed - nose. She ran the Post Office with the utmost efficiency and earned everyone's respect. In those days of the late 1920s, the only telephones in the village were at the Hall, the Mill and the Post Office, so many a time a child who happened to be lurking around the Post Office would be sent scampering off by Miss Sharp to tell Mr So-and-so he was wanted on the telephone.

I performed this service several times and felt very important about it too. After all, it is not often than an eight-year-old can send an entire farming household running in different directions, looking for a farmer who is wanted on a telephone about a quarter of a mile away. I think the caller must

have been quite desperate to speak to whoever they were calling because they often had to wait twenty minutes.

In those days the post was so completely reliable that, for three halfpence, a letter could be guaranteed to arrive next day anywhere in the country. Indeed, a letter posted in Birmingham before nine a.m. would be delivered during the evening of that same day in Southampton.

Miss Sharp was also the relief organist at church and played for funerals and, when required, for weekday weddings. I specify, 'when required'



Elford Church
© Tamworth Digital archive

because only the better-off families bothered to have music for their wedding or, for that matter, for their funerals.

I was about ten years old when Miss Sharp died suddenly. She lived quite alone, so it was only when the Post Office van driver called to deliver the mail one morning and was unable to get a reply, that anyone realised something was wrong.

The postwoman who delivered the letters in the village came along, and, between them they managed to get inside. There they found Miss Sharp dead in a chair. This caused a great 'to-do' in the village, and the Post Office remained closed all that day.

Next day, someone came out from Tamworth to take care of the Post Office until a new postmaster and postmistress could be appointed. Meanwhile, relatives of the dead woman gathered on the scene. There was no one particularly close, but several cousins arrived and began a thorough search for a Will. Everyone felt sure she had made one, but none of the solicitors in Tamworth had drawn one up for her. There were no close friends, but people who had known her for many years were confident she would have left clear instructions somewhere regarding the disposal of her property. She was, after all, the essence of organisation and orderliness.

Many weeks went by, and many hours were spent searching every nook and cranny. Books were shaken, chairs almost pulled apart, cushions ripped open, but no Will was ever found. Eventually the relatives decided to abandon the search, and the house and contents were put up for auction.

The house was bought privately by the man and woman who had been appointed to run the Post Office and, when the contents were sold, the village had the time of its life. Mother went, along with almost every other woman in the village.

Miss Sharp had, it appeared, been unlucky in love, for there were trunks, boxes and baskets filled with brand new bed and table linen, towels, china, cutlery and, most intriguing of all, fine lawn nightdresses, petticoats, 'drawers' and chemises (six of each), all beautifully hand-stitched and trimmed with broderie anglaise or handmade lace. It was only when these treasure

chests were revealed that some of the older residents recalled having heard of a broken romance when Miss Sharp moved to the village fifty years previously. Her father had been a prosperous coal merchant and he was delighted when his only daughter became engaged to the son of one of his oldest friends.

But, a month before the wedding, the prospective bridegroom departed and was next heard of in Australia whence he had gone with a clerk from his father's office whom he had married before leaving England. The shock caused Mr Sharp to have a heart attack from which he never recovered.

The linen and underwear had yellowed with age, but it was obvious that they were of the highest quality, while some of the sheets were still in their original parcels which contained the receipted bill. Many women sighed and clucked sympathetically as the various items came under the auctioneer's hammer. But the sighs turned to smiles and giggles when some of the underwear was held up for inspection.

There was only one Public House in the village and that was called the Crown. The landlord was Mr Rowe and, in addition to being a publican, he was a farmer of some standing, and he also had a coal lorry. There were four sons and three daughters, all of whom helped their parents one way or another.



Milk had to be delivered before the younger children went to school and each child in turn learned how to handle a horse and float from a very early age. The milk was in churns and measured out into the customer's own jugs. In



the winter, chilblains made this a punishing operation. Mother used to be most concerned when she saw the red and swollen fingers struggling painfully with the measures.

At weekends, poultry houses had to be cleaned out. This was a job undertaken by both boys and girls of the family. I particularly recall one of the girls – Rachel – complaining bitterly that she could never get her hands to look clean after mucking out the hen houses.

Grace and Mary, the elder daughters, helped their mother in the house and the dairy. Mrs Rowe made butter, some of which she sold to people in the village - including us. Grace was the oldest in the family and engaged to a neighbouring farmer. Next to her came Roger and then John. Roger used to be in charge of the coal delivery and, shortly after John became old enough to drive a motor vehicle, Mr Rowe inherited a sizeable sum of money which he used to buy two new lorries. These he used for collecting milk from farms round about, transporting it to a large dairy in Birmingham for bottling. Soon he had made enough money to buy a fourth lorry and he employed another driver. Thus began a flourishing road haulage business.

Mrs Rowe was a nice woman but inclined to look down her nose a little at some of the village girls, especially those who anticipated marriage. She had been heard to speak her mind forcibly on this subject one day at a meeting of the Mothers'

Union so it was unfortunate that within a year, Roger, Grace and John all married rather more quickly than they had intended. The villagers remembered and wagged their heads as their tongues worked overtime, especially those mothers who had themselves been placed in a similar position. One or two even took a fiendish delight in offering sympathy.

We had one 'professionally unemployed' man in the village. There were none of the present-day social security benefits, although I suppose he must have had some 'dole' money. He was called Sam and he lived with his mother. From time-to-time Sam would be found work road-mending or some other kind of labouring job, but after a couple of weeks he would be sacked. No one knew how he and his mother lived, but she always looked neat and tidy. I suppose he managed to scrounge a few shillings here and there.

He habitually wore a dark purple overcoat fastened back at the rear with safety pins to keep it clear of his bicycle wheels, and a dark-coloured cap along with a white muffler around his neck, and bicycle clips. Every Friday, he would cycle into Tamworth to 'sign on', returning during the afternoon. He was between thirty and forty years of age and had been in the Army during the First World War.

After demobilisation, he seemed to have decided that, henceforth, work was not for him. People ridiculed him and felt sorry for his mother. It must have been a very drab and dreary sort of life for both of them. But no one seemed to know what his mother thought about it because she kept herself to herself.

Every village was reckoned to have its 'village idiot' and Elford was no exception. I doubt if the unfortunate man was actually 'mentally deficient'. He was certainly harmless but had great difficulty with his speech and walked with queer jerking movements. The children used to run after him and call him names, and when he turned suddenly to face his tormentors, they would run away, shrieking, as he said, *'You mustn't laugh at me-ee.'*

I was expressly forbidden to take part in this because my parents felt great sympathy for the poor man. No doubt nowadays he would have received proper diagnosis, professional help, education and training, but then he was treated as a freak. Every so often his mother would visit the school to complain about the children's behaviour, and things would go quiet for a while but then it would start again.

He must have been about forty years old at that time, so his mother would be over sixty. I've often wondered how he fared when she died. He came of a large family so perhaps a kindly brother or sister gave him shelter.

Although times were hard, as children we were not made terribly aware of it. After all, no one in the village had much money and although some were obviously better off than others, it really depended on the size of the family. At any rate we, in our family, never knew hunger, nor were we ever cold for lack of warm clothing. We never had a lot of clothes and when I started at the High School and had to wear school uniform, that became my 'best' as well as my school wear. I had to change into older things when I arrived home each evening and, unless we were going somewhere special on a Saturday, I wore older clothes then as well. There was never any question of what came first and indeed, for many



years and in many families, that was the rule. School uniform had to be worn, so any other clothing purchase came a very poor second.

Only once did Mother relent and it was I who later wished she hadn't. I begged and begged to be allowed to have a different coloured winter coat instead of the same old navy blue. I was about fourteen at the time and we had left Elford. Reluctantly, Mother bought me a light blue-grey coat. The following year, my school coat was so outgrown that there was no alternative to wearing the light-coloured coat for school. Although it was not strictly forbidden, any colour other than navy was viewed with disapproval and I felt so conspicuous and embarrassed. How I hated it! I vowed then that no child of mine would ever be in such a position.

Many of the families in Elford had lived in the village for generations and there had been quite a lot of intermarriage.

There were however a few newcomers like us, and how quickly they were accepted depended on how ready they were to conform to the ways of the village and to participate in the various activities. On the whole most people fitted in well. There was something comfortable about knowing that a letter addressed to Mrs So-and-so, Elford, would be delivered because everyone knew everyone else and there was no need for a more detailed address. Most people did, of course, use their proper addresses but if they didn't, well - not to worry - the letter would arrive at its proper destination on time.

The only new houses built in the village during the 1920s were eight semi-detached council houses, set in a row, not far from our own cottage. In the first of these lived a Scottish family called Gordon. Mr Gordon, like our rector's brother-in-law, Mr Prince, had been a veterinary surgeon. Unfortunately, also like Mr Prince, he had become mentally unstable. When the Gordons first went to live there, he was already showing signs of his illness and had retired from practice. Gradually he became worse and spent most of his time locked in a small bedroom. He was never really violent, but he made a lot of noise, and his shouts could be heard for some considerable distance. His wife was a delightful, silver-haired lady with twinkling blue eyes and pink cheeks. She was short and plump and blessed with a cheerful disposition.

With them lived Rose, a thin, angular, middle-aged lady whose position in the household was a cross between companion and housekeeper. In addition, she exercised the several cairn terriers and could be seen each day walking to the village carrying food and water for the other dogs which were housed in kennels rented from the Squire. All these dogs belonged to a titled lady who lived abroad and who had left them in the Gordons' care. Rose usually had two dogs on a lead, and I never remember seeing her wear anything other than a fawn raincoat with a felt hat pulled well down over her head.

Mrs Gordon was never particularly forthcoming. When asked how Mr Gordon was faring, her reply was invariably, 'Well, he's no worse!' Then she would smile, and people would marvel at her cheerfulness.

She had a married daughter who, together with husband and young daughter, would visit her from time to time. They were amiable people and if their visit coincided with a Bank Holiday, as it often did, Mrs Gordon, daughter, son-in-law and granddaughter would all attend the dance at the Village Hall, leaving Rose in charge at home. Everyone would be pleased to see Mrs Gordon out enjoying herself, and her Scots accent was a pleasant change from the flatter Midlands vernacular of the rest of us. How she enjoyed herself too, entering fully into the spirit of the evening, and how we admired the smart dresses of her daughter and granddaughter.

In the second block of council houses lived a retired Army officer and his wife and daughter. Mother and daughter dressed smartly, and both were extremely handsome.

Christine, the daughter, was in her late teens when I first remember her. She was slim and dark-haired, her hair neatly bobbed, and she wore bright colours, always in the latest fashion. She did not go out to work, so her father must have retired on a good pension, and perhaps had some private means. At any rate, they seemed to want for nothing. Christine owned an Alsatian dog which she trained to carry a shopping basket and which no doubt one would say today 'added to her image'.

When I was about ten years old, she married a Commercial Traveller from Tamworth. I went along to the church to see the wedding, which was a low-key affair, on a weekday in the school holidays. Christine and her mother wore dresses of floral chiffon with large picture hats, and Christine carried a shower bouquet of carnations. After the wedding, the newlyweds lived with her parents, but no one knew much about the bridegroom, nor how Christine had come to meet him as she did not appear to go out much and certainly never participated in any of our village activities. There is nothing more aggravating than knowing a little of someone's private life and being unable to discover more. This was the case with Christine and Dick. They were personable and would chat to people but were skillful at revealing nothing. It really was most annoying for everyone.

The last house in the row was occupied by the headmistress of the village school. It stood out from the rest because the garden contained 'different' shrubs, plants and trees. In an area where everyone had daffodils and narcissi in

spring, together with the odd lilac and laburnum, the end house had scyllas and anemones, lupins and buddleia and, of course, the high dividing fence was festooned with tea roses.

Every garden in the village was well cultivated and ours was no exception. Dad was always ready to try something new so he would spend many winter evenings poring over the seed catalogue before sending off for his supply. A new variety of potato guaranteed immune from this or that disease, or a pea which produced a bigger and better crop was often included on his list, in addition to the tried and trusted varieties. Naturally, vegetables and soft fruit took up a greater part of the garden, but directly in front of the house was our flower garden. Roses were Dad's great love, and he could never resist the latest variety. On many occasions, we noticed people stop to look over our front gate at the profusion of beautiful blooms. We had bush roses, standard roses of every colour, and - near the front door - Dad built rustic arches on which he trained Dorothy Perkins roses whose great clusters of fragrant blooms were a joy to behold.

Bordering the path in spring, we had blue aubretia trailing over the triangular-set bricks, and behind them were rows of red and yellow wallflowers. In summer, the wallflowers were replaced by stock and asters, with a row of red carnations at the back, and delphiniums behind the carnations.

A portion of the main garden was always reserved for sweet peas. Few gardens in the village did not boast these lovely, delicate flowers.

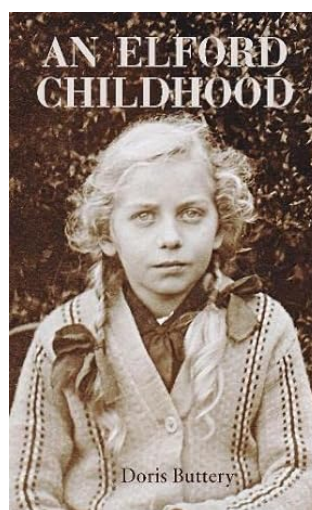
Sometimes, on a summer evening, a stranger would call and ask to buy a bunch of flowers. Dad would pick a huge bunch for which the passer-by would pay, perhaps, sixpence and go happily on his way.

All this, I took for granted.

Next time: The Village School



Doris in 'fancy' dress outside their home, Mill Cottage, Elford. 1st Jan 1932
© Ann Nibbs



This extract is taken from '*An Elford Childhood*' by Doris Buttery published by Umbria Press, price £9.99 and available from Ann Nibbs by contacting her on Ann.nibbs@gmail.com.

A Brief Introduction to the History of Middleton Hall

by Deborah Jordan



Middleton Hall is located about four miles to the south of Tamworth, just off the A4091. It was claimed to have been the longest continually inhabited residence in Warwickshire when it was sold in 1966 by Frederick Averill to Amey Roadstone Construction (ARC). ARC had primarily desired the site in order to use it for gravel extraction.

Middleton Hall could not be demolished because it had been Grade II* listed in 1951. However, this did not prevent the Hall from becoming a ruin under their ownership.

In 1977, a group of ramblers from the Tamworth Civic Society saw the derelict Hall and decided to make enquiries as to whether it would be possible to save it. Together with other organisations, such as the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, a campaign was begun to try and save it. Despite being deemed as "beyond repair" by North Warwickshire Borough Council, the various organisations believed that there was still a chance.

Middleton Hall Trust was then formed in 1980 to restore the Hall and its grounds and then manage the 42 acres that contained them. This

1977 -Derelict Middleton Hall © Max Ellerslie



included an area that had been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest in 1973 and covered the entirety of Middleton Pool.

Middleton Pool is believed to be the oldest surviving man-made lake in Warwickshire. It was established in the 1590s by Sir Francis I Willoughby who inherited Middleton in 1559 and owned it until his death in 1596. He was an entrepreneurial character who tried various ventures, including the successful and profitable growing of hops at Middleton and the failed attempt to make the river Trent navigable to the confluence with the river Tame. If he had



Middleton Pool
© Tamworth Digital Archive

“There is another letter from Lady Arundell to her brother, in which she wishes he had not began his work upon the Treant (the making it navigable), because it would be so chargeable. She writes that she thinks his wife should not be so unreasonable, and if he continues at Middleton, that will make a tryal whither she more desires to enjoy his company or follow her own will. She writes that she is uncertain whither her Highness will go to York or stay at Kyllingworth.

Middleton Manuscripts Pg530 © Middleton Hall

succeeded, his fleet of barges, which he used to transport coal from his Nottinghamshire manors across the country, would have been able to travel from Nottingham along these rivers.

The Tame is part of the Middleton manor and thus, beyond the possible technological and financial benefits, this project would have had the massive transportation benefit of connecting his manors by river. However, the activity that has had the longest lasting impact on Middleton was his foray into iron-working.

In the 1570s, Sir Francis established a bloomery at Middleton and then improved this to a hammer mill. Both of these were profitable. In the 1590s, he decided to construct a waterwheel-powered blast furnace but it needed a greater force of water. Thus, he dammed the Langley Brook, which formed Middleton Pool.

In the late 19th century, a fossilised trilobite of the species *Homalonotus Delphinocephalus* was discovered in the clay at the edge of Middleton Pool. This caused great national scientific excitement at the time. However, further

investigation over the following years revealed that its presence at Middleton was because Sir Francis had imported a great many cartloads of clay from his cousin Bess of Hardwick's lands in Derbyshire for the Pool. This clay lined the new Pool to reduce water seepage in the same way as canals were later lined.

Middleton Manuscripts Pg494/495
© Middleton Hall

1571, December 6.—Letter from JOHN TYROR to FRANCIS WILLOUGHBY regarding the manufacture of iron.

“Yt maye please youre wurshyppe to understande I have spoken with the yron-men abowt Walsall, [of] whom I have knowledge, of the prices of ther tra[de] . . . as followeth :

Fyrst ther stonne is worth at the [pytte] ready gotten iiij.s. every lode ; from the pytte to Myddleton is . . . myles, every lode caredge wyll cost iij.s. or ther abowt ; every lode of stonne wyll make a blome ; the blomer wyll have for every blome xvjd. ; the blome is made in xij. howres. Then the brander wyll have for every brand vjd. Every blome makes ij. brandes, which wyllbe wrought in iij. howres ; viij. blomes wyll make a tunne of yron, and then ther is allowed to the burnynge of every tunne viij. lode of coles, which is valued every lode at vjs. viijd. ; and every tunne of yron is worth when it is branded vijli. or ther abowt. These chargis are certayne, bysydes other for common worke men, as nede shall requyre. For the takyng or purchasyng of any grownd where the stone is gotten, it is very hard to come by, for it is dayly layed for by my Lord Paget, and hath benne longe, but he cann neyther take nor purchase, as I am credibly informyd by honest men. Thus muche I dyd learne uppon Satterdaye last by very honest men, who were in hand with me very earnestly to buy wood for the same purpose, and gladly wold bestow a hundreth powndes or more yf yt maye please youre wurshippe to consyder hereof. It is thought bye them that have travayled longe in the aforsayd trayde that youre wooddes wyllbe better sold, and more gayne to you, then yf you shuld sett uppe smythis, considerynge the great charge and trobble that doth belonge unto them. And further the saye yf you shuld set them uppe, youre wooddes wold not serve you iij. yere, and your woodde beyng gone, there is not any leafte in the cowntrey to be bowght, except it be Drayton lordshyppe.

From Myddleton, the vj. of December, 1571.

By youre obedyent servaunt,

John Tyror.

[Endorsed :]—To the ryght worshypfull and his synguler good mr., Mr. Francis Wyllughby, esquier, at Nottingham, geve these with spede.” 165



Remains of Blast Furnace © Rehana Firth

Unfortunately, the blast furnace was not profitable due to the large amounts of ironstone and limestone that had to be imported. It ceased production soon after Sir Francis' death but the remains of it are still visible on the east side of the Middleton Pool dam.

When Middleton Hall Trust was established, the initial funding for the restoration came from a covenant of £25,000 per year paid for by ARC for the first five years. This was subsequently extended to ten years. The funding could only be used to pay for materials and therefore a considerable amount of the work had to be undertaken by volunteers. To date, more than 500 volunteers have been involved in the restoration and management of Middleton Hall.

The volunteers were and still are involved in many different aspects including craft-work, gardening, historical research, fundraising, administration and front-of-house.

Middleton Hall is a highly unique structure. It is a very old structure and, although the Hall was renovated at various times throughout its history, often small pieces from each of the earlier features or forms were retained. A considerable amount is known about the Hall's complicated long architectural history, although many questions remain and new discoveries are still often made.

Middleton has a known lineage of ownership from the Domesday Book. It identified that, at the time of the Norman Conquest, it contained two manors the boundary of which was the Langley Brook. Before the Conquest, the northern manor belonged to Palli of Middleton, whilst the southern manor belonged to Thorgot. After the Conquest, the northern manor was held by Hugh de Grandmesnil, whilst the southern one was the possession of his

wife Adeliza de Beaumont-sur-Oise. They both left their manors to their son Ivo, which made Middleton a single manor for the first time in its history. As a result of choosing the wrong side in a rebellion, in 1101 Ivo mortgaged his English

Domesday book mentioning Middleton

© Prof J J N Palmer



lands, including Middleton, for 15 years to Robert de Beaumont de Meulan, who then became the 1st Earl of Leicester. He was supposed to return the manor to Ivo's sons but reneged on the contract and upon Robert's death it was granted to his brother, Henry de Beaumont de Newburgh, 1st Earl of Warwick. Upon his death in 1119, King Henry I seized the manor and was stated to have intended to return it to Ivo's sons. However, before he did, both of them died in the White Ship disaster on 11th November 1120. The King then granted Middleton to Roger de Marmion, who was already in possession of Tamworth Castle. For about the next 300 years, Middleton was tied by ownership to Tamworth.

It is known that the first Middleton Hall constructed on the current site was built circa 1220. The date of this work coincides with the reconstruction of Tamworth Castle after the First Baron's War. Moreover, the stone used is also very similar. At this time, it is known that Middleton was a dower possession of Philippa, the widow of Robert IV de Marmion, 3rd Baron Marmion of Tamworth. This first Hall was a timber-framed Hall built upon sandstone plinth foundations within a double island moat. Structures were also built to the east of the moat. The only one of those buildings that has survived today is what is now called the Tudor Barn. This building still has its original 13th century foundations and stone chimneys. However, it was considerably renovated by Bridget and Percival Willoughby in 1604 to give its current form and appearance, minus the Victorian brick nogging. It is currently on English Heritage's most-at-risk register and is one of only two buildings left to be restored by Middleton Hall Trust. The Trust plans to commence the restoration of this building soon.

The next renovation of Middleton Hall came during the ownership of Philip de Marmion, 5th Baron Marmion of Tamworth. He constructed the Stone Building, which has been described as the oldest surviving domesticated building in Warwickshire. It is known that it was built before 1285 and was originally larger than its current form. The Stone Building was built atop the foundations of an earlier building. Furthermore,



Stone building at Middleton Hall
© Joanna Harbart

a piece of timber used atop the east wall was a re-used timber at the time of its construction. That is the oldest piece of timber at Middleton Hall. However, it is often overshadowed by the original pointed barrel-vaulted roof of this Building, which still contains many original timbers. When Middleton Hall Trust was formed, it was not known that this roof frame



Barrel Vaulting in Stone building at Middleton Hall © Deborah Jordan

had survived. This was because, in its 18th century Georgian renovation, the roof had been completely covered externally by a hipped roof and internally by lath and plaster. Moreover, even the original roof tiles were retained between the roof, which means that we know that the original tiles were buff-coloured and covered in a green glaze.

Following the death of Philip de Marmion in 1291, Middleton, unlike Tamworth, was divided equally between his heirs. The division not only included the rents, lands, fishery, the garden of Middleton Hall and the profits from the mills and manorial court but also an equal share of Middleton Hall itself. No document has been found yet to explain how they actually managed the division of the Hall. However, they must have come to a suitable arrangement because Middleton remained divided from Philip's death until 1495. Hence, this is a very complicated period of ownership in which multiple lineages are followed and the divisions were often further divided or granted as dowers or Courtesy of England and even on a couple of occasions seized by the crown for an indiscretion before being returned a few years later after a fine.

In 1391, during this divided ownership period, Sir Baldwin IV de Freville received a licence to construct a chapel within Middleton Hall. He then constructed an ornate decoratively timber framed chapel that was located on the northern side of the Hall. The original form of this structure was obscured in later renovations. This is thought to have first occurred during the Tudor renovation in order to hide its function and then again in the Georgian renovation. However, in 1901, Egbert de Hamel, who was the tenant at that time, made a detailed account, with measurements, of the remaining parts of the original form of this structure. In hindsight, his record has been vitally important because in the 1920s the chapel was "accidentally" demolished. Only a small section of the chapel framing survived and this is now visible to visitors.

In 1418, following the death of Baldwin de Freville, the son of Sir Baldwin IV, Middleton was divided between his heirs. Whereas Tamworth became a possession of the elder sister, Elizabeth, who married Sir Thomas Ferrers, the heirs decided that the full ownership of Middleton would revert to her sister Margaret, who married Sir Hugh Willoughby. It was during Margaret's ownership, in the 1450s, that a



Chapel Detail © Philip and William De Hamel

new close-studded timber-framed South Wing and the first West Wing were constructed. Although both of these Wings were demolished during the Georgian renovation, all of the materials of those Wings were retained and re-used in various places around the Hall. This has made dendrochronological analysis of the current structure rather complicated.

Margaret lived to a "great age" and died in 1493. Throughout her life, Middleton Hall was stated to have been her principal residence. At her death, she was in possession of two-thirds of Middleton. Her grandson, Sir Henry Willoughby inherited and, in 1495, he purchased the final third from John le Boteler to re-unite the manor again under a single owner. This began the period of Willoughby ownership of Middleton Hall, which lasted for over 430 years.

Chapel Detail © Philip and William De Hamel



Interior of Priest's Hiding Place



Margaret de Freville brass in Middleton Parish Church © Deborah Jordan

Soon after he took possession, Sir Henry constructed a new, unusually tall, timber-framed Great Hall at Middleton Hall. The Great Hall present today is still timber-framed although, because of its form after the Georgian renovation, it does not outwardly appear to be so.

Sir Henry died in 1528 and his son Sir John Willoughby inherited. In the 1530s, he undertook a very substantial Tudor renovation of Middleton Hall. In this renovation, he added a first floor to the existing structures and connected together all of the separate buildings that formed the main Hall by the construction of an external first-floor level gallery corridor. He also constructed the Jettied Building.

Jettied building

© JMedia



The Jettied Building was restored between 2000 and 2003 and is inadvertently responsible for the current appearance of Middleton Hall. Over the centuries, renovations that were made to the Jettied Building had directly caused significant structural damage.

If Middleton Hall Trust had followed the instructions of English Heritage and reconstructed it to its last period of habitation, we would have had to reconstruct all of the undesirable techniques too. The Trust appealed to English Heritage who granted a special dispensation. As the homogeneous character of the site was consequently broken, the buildings that were restored after this point could also be restored to earlier

eras as well. This means that Middleton Hall now offers the rare opportunity to observe various eras of English architecture in a single place.

In 1647, Sir Francis II Willoughby, constructed what is known today as the John Ray Building. Middleton Hall Trust gave it this name because an inventory from 1676 identified the first floor of this Building as John Ray's Chamber. John Ray

Jettied building

© Tamworth Digital archive



FRS was described by Sir Geoffrey Keynes as the father of English botany. Indeed, in his masterpiece *Historia Plantarum* he not only classified over 11,000 plants, he also invented a completely new botanical language, which included words such as petal and species, that were used with their modern meaning for the first time.

Ray had been invited to live at Middleton Hall in 1662 after having lost his profession and residence at the University of Cambridge following the Act of Uniformity. Francis Willughby FRS (which is how he spelled his surname), who was the son of Sir Francis II, was a close friend of Ray and they shared an interest in the developing field of natural history. Together they decided to investigate the natural world and this resulted in the creation of a novel system of classification that was the foundation for most subsequent natural historians. Their interests extended beyond natural history and their experiments and writings are extensive. They also used Middleton Hall and its grounds as a kind of living laboratory for their studies. In 1663, Willughby became an original fellow of the Royal Society.

Willughby died in 1672, leaving most of his works in an unfinished state and his will tasked Ray with teaching his children and finishing his



work. In 1676, Ray published Willughby's *Ornithologia*, which is recognised as the first scientific book on birds and still considered as a fundamental text in ornithology. This was followed by Willughby's *Historia Piscium* and, after Ray's death in 1705, the Royal Society published *Historia Insectorum*. The Royal Society published it under Ray's name but a large portion of the book was Willughby's research.

Main Hall © JAmelia



South wing

© Tamworth Digital archive



Thomas Willoughby, Francis Willoughby's youngest son, became 1st Lord Middleton in 1712. He undertook a Georgian renovation of Middleton that began in 1707 and was not completed until 1762. This meant that not only Thomas, who died in 1729, but also his son Francis 2nd Lord Middleton, who died in 1758, did not live to see the completion of this renovation. It was completed by Francis' son, Francis 3rd Lord Middleton.

The Georgian renovation was a complete renovation of the grounds and Hall and gave everything a Georgian appearance. However, for many structures it was only an appearance with the structure retained within the lime plaster covered walls. A completely new brick South

Wing and West Wing were constructed in this renovation, albeit one in 1709 and the other in 1759. Between the changes in owner, changes in workmen and changes in the Georgian architectural fashion, this accounts for the very different appearances of these Wings. The new Georgian appearance was so effective that, even in the 20th century, numerous reports wrongly stated that all of Middleton Hall was made of brick and nothing remained of the original Hall.

Thomas 1st Lord Middleton was also a member of the Royal Society and had a particular interest in botany. As part of his Georgian renovation, in about 1717 (which is when the Middleton financial accounts indicate that the bricks were purchased), he constructed a novel heated



Walled Garden at Middleton Hall © JMedia

walled garden at Middleton Hall in which every wall had a flue, with the north wall even having a double flue. These walls were heated from basic coal or charcoal-burning stoves located at the base of the walls. Apart from Middleton Hall, the earliest use of this technology is recognised as 1718 at Belvoir Castle. Thomas' walled garden was made smaller, to the size present today, in about 1790 by Henry Willoughby, 5th Lord Middleton.

In 1802, Henry Willoughby 6th Lord Middleton leased Middleton Hall to his brother-in-law, Sir Francis Lawley. For the remainder of the ownership of Middleton Hall by the Willoughby family, Middleton Hall was leased to tenants. In 1924, the Middleton Estate, along with many of their other manors, was sold by Michael Willoughby, 11th Lord Middleton, in order to pay for death duties. The Estate was broken up and the plot containing Middleton Hall was purchased by John Averill, a farmer and industrialist.

The surviving documented history of Middleton Hall, its grounds, its owners and the people who lived there is extremely extensive. Furthermore, when archaeological discoveries are also included, we have information about the site going back to the Stone Age. The historical research possibilities are vast and often take the researchers in unexpected directions.

One of the groups of volunteers at [Middleton Hall today](https://www.middleton-hall.co.uk/) is the Historical Research Group, which has only recently been re-established. This group of volunteers have been given the freedom to pick any topic of their choice to jointly research with the aim of creating an exhibition from their work. The topic chosen for the 2025 season exhibition was Kathleen de Hamel and her invention of the bicycle flower basket. Kathleen was the daughter of the last tenant of Middleton Hall, Egbert de Hamel. She had been born in Tamworth and the family moved to Middleton Hall in 1886. At the age of 13, in 1896, she invented the bicycle flower basket, being the first to replace the lamp on the front of the bicycle with the basket. Her invention was publicised in the magazine *The Wheel-woman*. This topic has taken the volunteers on a journey, which has led to learning more about the development of the bicycle, rational dress and attitudes to women cycling. They have also collaborated with Sutton Coldfield College whose students have created outfits to show how cycling changed Victorian clothing.

To find out more about Middleton Hall please visit <https://www.middleton-hall.co.uk/>

Before becoming derelict.

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Book Review

The Forgotten Past of Wigginton Village 18th to 20th Century

Robert Watson and Pamela Marshall

Published privately 2024

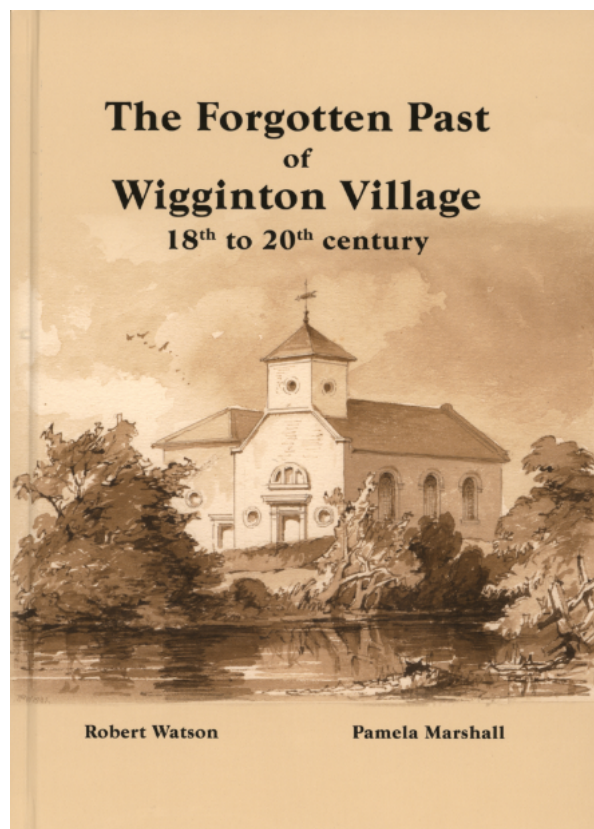
ISBN N/A

Hardback 175 pages

This is a labour of love by the authors and a must have for anyone in, or with relatives in, or an interest in Wigginton. A beautiful hardback book is the sort of book you can pick up, flick through and find something interesting, I did every time I opened it. You don't need to read it end to end. Though I must admit I ended up doing that.

Whilst it claims to cover 18th to 20th centuries the first two pages are "early years", a gallop from 1086 to 1770, followed by a fantastic hand coloured map showing the 40 odd buildings in the village from the 18th century. Additionally it names all the fields from Watery Gate and Far Holme east of the railway line to Hanging Pit and Bottom Meadow in the west, Tank Field and Reel Harrow in the south and finally up to Night Pasture in the North.

However this is not a history book as such. The rest of the book focuses on places rather than chronology. For each there are numerous photos. Now I know what you are thinking, photos from the 1700s? Well there are pictures of various interesting documents, maps, posters, newspaper cuttings and signs from the 1700s and early 1800s. Then the addition of photos from the late 1800s with notes giving what, why and crucially who is in them. This is a record of people, something that is very often lost with old photographs. This gives a history of the places and people. Things like the Rev JR



158 Manor House Farm

Manor House Farm became the new family home of Edward and wife Mary.



Edward Faux 1855 - 1932

The 1901 census records Edward age 46 wife Mary Ellen age 43, son Richard age 1 born at Syerscote, daughter Elizabeth age 5, together with domestic servants, school governess and a labourer all living in.

Situations Vacant section of the local paper shows an advertisement for a Housemaid.

WANTED, GENERAL for Farmhouse, Housemaid kept.—Mrs. E. FAUX, Wigginton, Tamworth. 101p

Source
Tamworth Herald 1908



Son Richard Faux on his new bicycle c.1910

Bates from the 1930s with his dog, Patch. It's these details that bring things to life and for Patch to live on forever. Well, we are a nation of dog lovers. Much of the information from the 20th century is, I suspect, oral history and details that will be all but impossible to find by outsiders with traditional research.

There are sections on the community, and some of the people in it along with Samuel Parkes VC who earned the medal at the infamous Charge of the Light Brigade and survived. Perhaps more important to the village is Elizabeth Beardsley and her legacy.

Other gems are the discussion on whether to install 4 electric street lights in 1928 to run from dusk until 10:30 at night. The thing is this book whilst discussing the 18th to 20th centuries often references things a millennium before.

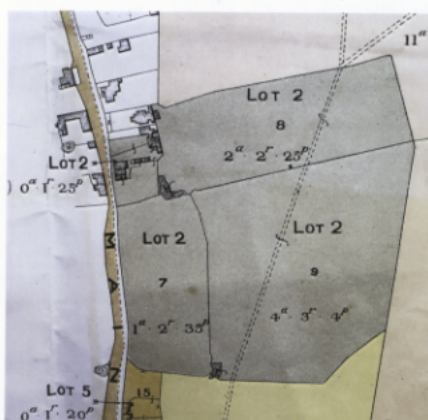
For casual readers this is a fantastic book. For historians, this is not a comprehensive history but will be a very useful resource for anyone researching the village. Especially as all the sources are given for the photos, maps etc. This will save hours (weeks) of research as you can start where this book stops, but you will be in the right place to find the rest. However as mentioned I think there is some oral history in there too you won't find elsewhere.

The important thing is they name the people in the photos, which is invaluable for historians. With a name, date and picture you can easily find the rest of the recorded history. The authors could have also done this but where do you stop? The history of Wigginton in 3, 4, 5 or more volumes?

For anyone with a connection to the village this will be a wonderful book to have.

Blacksmith Shop - Main Road

Lot 2 of the auction of land by the Trustees of the Brown/Ingle estate of Wigginton House on 17th September 1894 consisted of :



Three Messuages
Blacksmith's Shop
Stable and Penthouse
3 Closes

The Site Plan taken
from the area map
shown in the
Wigginton House
section, page 54.

The blacksmith was a highly skilled and valuable part of the village community. Joseph Wheway was recorded on census and Kelly's Directory over the years from 1871 to 1891 as blacksmith, farrier and general smith.

LOT 2.				
THREE MESSUAGES & GARDENS				
Situate fronting the said Road, and adjoining the Village School with the Blacksmith's Shop, Stable and Pent-house now in the occupation of Messrs. J. WHEWAY, C. BIRD, T. LUCAS, also those Three Closes of Rich old Turf Land adjoining and extending along the said Road, The respective areas of the same being as follows.				
6.	Site of Cottages, Gardens, etc.	...	...	0 1' 35"
7.	The Croft	...	...	1 2' 35"
8.	Far Croft	...	...	3 2' 35"
9.	Perry Furlong	...	...	4 3' 4"
Total				9 2' 9"
7. 8. 9. Now in the occupation of Mr. J. WILSON.				

In the 1970's the Blacksmith's Shop was demolished, and the site cleared to make way for a block of four Council owned flats.

This book has been privately printed and as one of the authors doesn't have email if you are interested in getting a copy email the Editor Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk and we can forward requests.

Also, if anyone has this book and has additional information, not in it, Tamworth Heritage Magazine would like to hear from you with a view to doing some articles on Wigginton. We may even be looking at another volume!

Letters to the Editor



Dear Editor

I have been passed an enquiry you made on Facebook with regard to an old photograph of Elford post office.

There have been several post offices in Elford including the Beck, two on the square and one on Church Road... The one you want is on what is now called Church Road and is currently "the wickets" almost opposite the lodge.

The postmistress was indeed Miss Emma Eliza Sharpe (She never married) but was born in Elford and I think at one time was a coal merchant. She died still at the post office in 1931. Hope that helps

Greg

Editor: *Many thanks for that. Until your email I had no idea there were four post offices in Elford. In fact I have very little information on Elford at all. Actually I had no pictures of any post office! Neither did the author of the Elford Childhood! Now we have yours on this page and...*

Dear Editor,

My daughter lives at post office cottage and she has plenty of photos of the post

office/ shop. Also when I read the book I remember some of the details incorrect and my mothers name is mentioned

Regards

Jennifer

Editor: *Many thanks and the pictures of Elford Post Office in the Elford Childhood do come from the current owner of this, now former, post office. If any other residents of elford would like to contrite to the Magazine that would be fantastic. Especially the other three Post offices. We can do a special on Elford.*





Dear Editor

I was only 2 years old when my father took over the Station Cafe in 1960 but spent those early years before school amusing the many customers there.

Memories from around the age of 4 years old & people are often amazed at what I recollect. My Father also rented "Bolehall" Manor House from the Council & ran it as a Boarding House for the Irish Road workers that built the M42 ...I recall 23 Rooms & 8 Bathrooms at the time.

My father employed an elderly gent to "live in" in the ground floor (Apartment) who Managed the Building & collected the rents. Often the odd occupant would up & leave overnight owing Rent!!

Thank you for sending the photos through, I have looked closely at each one & don't recognise anyone unfortunately.

I would say those are pre 1960 and certainly the image inside the Cafe shows a Juke Box just inside the entrance, in my parents days the Jukebox was on the end wall at the Top End of the Cafe & 3 possibly 4 Pinball machines were located along the rear wall to the left of the Counter & serving area.

The Car Park was as I remember it & the Station Master had a House by the entrance, he took me inside on a couple of occasions and I remember he had a very large Toy Train set laid out at table height with full landscaping, it took up a whole room. I was too young to remember his face, he may be one of the gentleman on your photo's?!



I've attached an image of 61, Albert Road . My old family home from 1960 - 64 , we moved to Lichfield mid 1964 but my father still owned the house & then rented it out to the RAF as a recruitment Centre I think. At least until around 1972/3

I remember going with him to collect rent on a Friday afternoon in his Regency Red 420G Jaguar which he bought new on 1st January 1970 from Attwoods in Walsall. AJW 402H Retail Price £2995.

The other image is my Mother Diana Jessica Smith Probably 1960 & I believe it's the entrance to the Station Cafe . She would be 25 years old at that time.

Our Neighbours in Albert Road were the "Arthur's", Blue Door on the right of photo.

I was friends with Susan the daughter & Mr Arthur was the Service Manager at "Marmion Motors" across the Road for many years, certainly into the late 70's ! I will ask my sisters if they have any others, I'm pretty sure there are quite a few more.

Regards
Roger

Editor: Roger it is a pity you don't recognise anyone in the pictures. Perhaps some of the other readers might be able too. Some one must know who they are. Clearly it was a bikers cafe as much as a railway Cafe. Was this a formal club or just an informal meeting place? Bikers and Cafes like this is where the term Cafe Racer for a just-about-street-legal racing bike came from. Racing between cafes.

As we have had several railway related articles in the Magazine and we should include the Station Cafe if any one can provide any names to these photos and hopefully more photos especially with names. Does any one know when the Station Cafe came into existence and when it was demolished?

If anyone has any information on the Station Cafe or the people who used it. In particular anyone in these photos, please contact the Editor on Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk otherwise we may loose this information altogether.

This social history of the people of Tamworth is as important as the names and dates of kings, baronets and Mayors. We should not loose it.



The Editor put out a request for information on the Cannons in the Castle Grounds after someone asked on Facebook:

Dear Editor

I saw a post on Facebook re the Cannons in the Castle Grounds, below is what I know

William Peel (1824 - 1858) 3rd son of Sir Robert Peel the town's famous MP served in the Navy. In 1849 William became the youngest Captain in the Royal Navy, serving with the Naval Brigade during the Crimean War.

From his time in the navy, he brought back many items including the anchor which can be found in Tamworth Castle Grounds. The anchor and chain near to the Gate House came from a Russian ship which saw action during the Crimean War.

The anchor and cable were purchased from the Peel Family of Drayton Manor for £12.00 (the equivalent of £1,529.61 today), and were re-located to the Castle Grounds from Drayton Manor, sometime after 1884 when the Peel estate was broken up. William also brought back several cannon balls which are in the Tamworth Castle collections.

More information about William Peel is available in the castle grounds on the information board next to the anchor. I would think that the cannons were from William's collection.

All of the above I read and have part copied from the Facebook Page Tamworth Castle posted a year ago so take no credit for the research, just for remembering where to look!

Please be aware also that in the Castle Hotel there are other remnants from Drayton Manor i.e. doors some with stain glass, ceilings, panelling etc. I hope that these items are preserved when the hotels fate is known.

Kindest regards
Debbie

Editor: Thanks for the information. Before I get on to the Cannons I will follow up on your comments about the Castle Hotel with the Castle Archive and TBC IT would be a shame if they went missing or got destroyed because people have no idea of their significance to Tamworth.



Peel's Russian Cannons Anchor © JAmmedia



Peel Anchor © Tamworth Digital Archive

As for the Cannons (and anchor) :-

The answer was, as it so often is in Tamworth "something to do with the Peel's" Your email prompted me to take some photos for the archive. The Castle Archivist added the following information: Not all of the cannons are of the same date. Identifying which one is which would require an expert in cannons. The cannon balls, which also used to be displayed alongside the cannons until some youths decided it would be fun to chuck them into the river. They were recovered and are now safely stored in the archive.

The minutes of the TBC Estate Committee Meeting says the cannons and anchor were brought back to England from the Crimea in 1855 but the purchase by TBC was in August 1918 At a meeting the week before there is a minute:

The committee recommend the purchase for £1/13/- of seven Cannon Balls as an adjunct to the Russian Anchor and Cable from Drayton Manor agreed to be purchased by the Council.

So it appears that the cannon balls and anchor were separate purchases. They may not have been Russian or even from the Crimea. Your editor will endeavour to find out more along with the other notes the Tamworth Castle Archivist sent that state that in that year "MINUTE 616 Secretary of the

Territorial Force Association, stating that on the recommendation of the Lord Lieutenant the War Trophies Committee had decided to offer to the Corporation a captured German field gun and carriage for safe care and custody, and it was resolved that the offer be accepted."

A German field gun!? That would be an imposing sight! They are quite large especially with the carriage as by WW1 they were all breach loaders not, as per the cannons in the castle, small muzzle loaders.



Cronulla Park's First World War Field Gun. Picture: Local History Collection, Sutherland Shire Libraries

There is a confirmation in 1920 that:

17th June 1920 Minute 745. GERMAN GUN

The Borough Surveyor reported the arrival of a third German gun at the Castle Grounds and the Committee recommend that the Council shall decide as to the place in which the gun shall be fixed.

However note that this says "a third German gun at the Castle" Interesting "a gun" has now become a battery of three guns. In WW1 field guns were breach loading and not the same design as the muzzle loading ship's cannons on the Castle Terraces. Does anyone have any information on these guns? Is Tamworth Borough Council hiding away a battery of field artillery and if so for what purpose?

Does anyone know about any doors, stained glass, panelling or ceilings (probably ceiling roses and other ornaments) from Drayton Manor that may now be part of the Castle Hotel? Much of Drayton Manor would have been sold off before and during demolition. In those days paperwork was not as rigorous as now and people would have reused as much as possible so there could be parts of Drayton Manor all over Tamworth and further afield. [Let the Editor know](#) if you know about the Castle Hotel or indeed think you have any things from Drayton Manor in your building.

Dear Editor

I was looking to get some history regarding my painting of Sir Robert Peel or any information regarding it as it is hanging on our living room wall. If anyone has any information we would be grateful but don't worry if no one else does. The information we would like to know is :



1) Where was the painting hung? It must have been somewhere of distinction for that information to be on the back.

2) Who commissioned this to be done? Again, I'm sure someone of certain stature would have had this done, as to us it is something that would have been shown off to any guests.

If you can find this and any other information it would be appreciated.

Regards
S Walton

Editor: We were unable to zoom into the photograph of the front of the painting so we cannot see it clearly without examining it in person, but could make out the information on the back. The editor has pondered and, again pushed his luck to get some advice from [Tamworth Castle Archive](#) (who are wonderful, if busy, people) the did some digging and this is what we have

The dates on the back 1788 – 1850 are those of Sir Robert Peel 2nd Bt.

From the legend on the reverse this is an engraving done by [Arthur Hogg](#) from the (original) painting by John Linnell – a famous portrait artist, whose works hang (or are in store) in the National Portrait Gallery in London. The link below tells you about John Linnell <https://artuk.org/discover/artists/linnell-john-17921882>

Below is the link showing you the original portrait of Sir Robert Peel by John Linnell, and to the left is the engraving by Arthur Hogg.

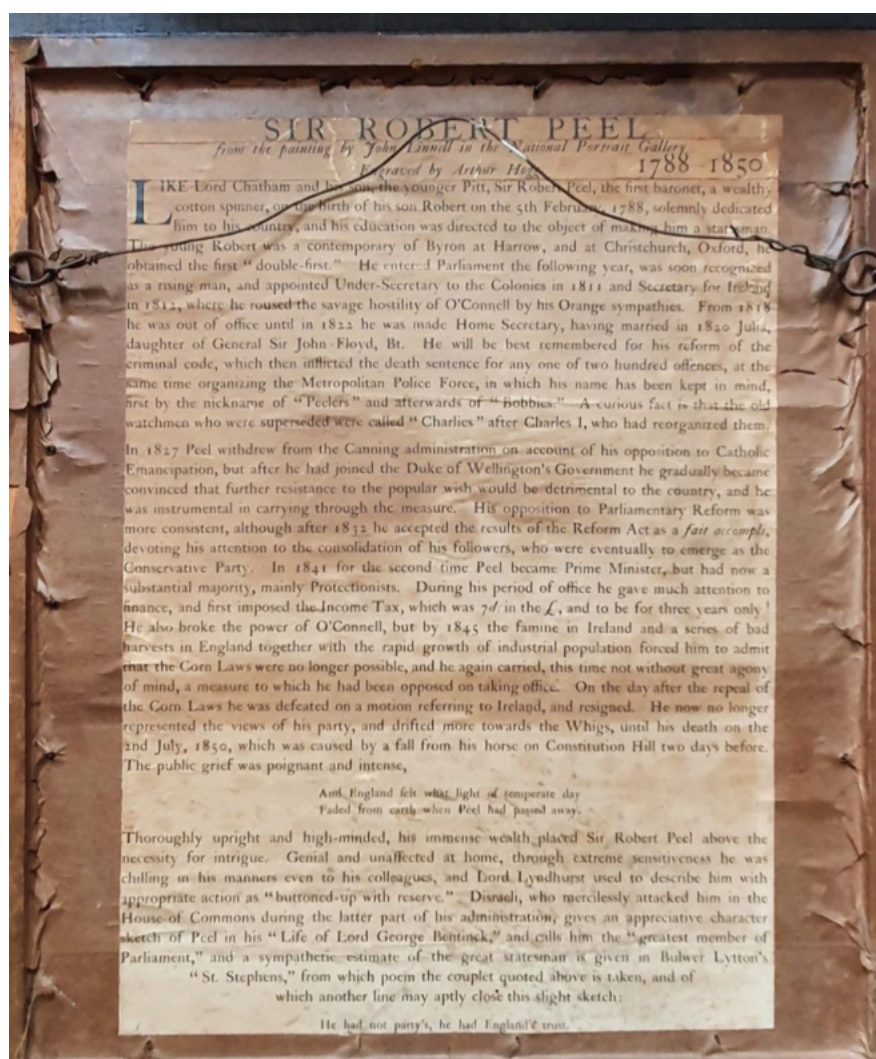
The difference between the two portraits is clearly visible. <https://artuk.org/search/search/search/2025--keyword:sir-robert-peel-by-john-linnell--referrer:global-search>

Yours is a very nice picture to have, but it is not an original, as the portrait by Arthur Hogg (if you look on the Art UK website) is in [Armagh County Museum in Ireland](#). And they will have had theirs very carefully verified.

I suspect the picture you have is a good print or engraving (there is a difference) of the Arthur Hogg portrait. The picture could possibly have hung in a Police station, a government office somewhere, and might even have been locally in Tamworth, or just in someone's home as you have it now.

Each copy of the picture would have had this legend on the reverse about the great statesman Sir Robert Peel 2nd Baronet.

If anyone remembers seeing this picture in Tamworth please let the editor know. Email Editor@Tamworthheritage.org.uk



Next Edition

Summer 2025

Publication Date: 1st July

Copy Date: 16th June

Articles on anything relating to Tamworth will be happily accepted. Articles should be 800-2000 words. Letters any length under 500 words.

Please submit any articles, letters or ideas to Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk

Copy Date (to in send article) 16th June

However please give as much advanced notice as possible. So we can allocate space or just in case there is more than one person writing on the subject.

Please send in article/letters in text, RTF, MS doc or docx, we can even accept odt format.

Any images to be sent separately NOT embedded in the text but please indicate in text approximate placement for each image. Images as high quality as you can manage in PNG, tiff or JPG. We can scan or convert most other formats. **Also any video. We can link in Video**

The Editorial Team can help with research, finding documents, scanning items, finding images (we have a photo library of over 20,000 images). We can take new photos if you need help with photography

Being a PDF magazine: We can also link-in web site links and video or audio files. **We can also produce video and audio if required.** Just contact the Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk

NOTE Any long articles may be shortened for the Magazine but also could be expanded and turned in to stand alone THT books. Contact the Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk



In the Next issue

The Next Issue is Volume 2 Issue 2 and we hope to be a little more organised with what is in these issues than we were for volume 1.

Several articles we hoped to have in this (and a previous issue) are proving longer to research and complete than anticipated. The History of the Tamworth Branch of the Royal British Legion for one! As we progress we should get a better process and schedule in place. As long as we get the input from the readers!

Volume 3 Issue 3 A Fascinating Article!

Written by YOU! If no one contributes there will be nothing to read.

If you don't want the **next issue to be the last one** the editors need articles. The Editors, the History, Genealogy, Archive, and Castle groups can all help with research and information. Email the Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk

Tamworth

HERITAGE

Magazine



Preserving the Past, Recording the Present
Safeguarding the Future