

Tamworth

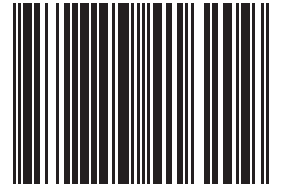
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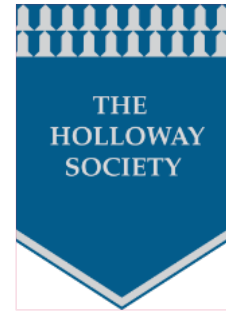
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Preserving the Past, Recording the Present
Safeguarding the Future

Tamworth Heritage Magazine



The magazine is produced four times a year: Winter, Spring, Summer, Autumn, by Tamworth Heritage Magazine, part of the [Holloway Society](#), for the public with an interest in Tamworth Heritage and history.



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A published author for 45 years on history, culture, travel and related topics. He also runs [Tamworth Digital Archive](#).

Deputy Editor *Could this be You?*

THM is looking for an Assistant Editor to take over as Editor for Vol 6 onwards 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



Days of future past

The only constant in life is change. Tamworth changes its Mayor annually, but after nearly 200 years the tradition will go when Tamworth becomes a Unitary Authority. So we got the outgoing, and as it stands, the penultimate, Mayor to write a retrospective on his year. In hindsight we should have started doing this about 195 years ago!

We also pushed the Mayor into giving his view of the future, dangerous given that everything is changing unpredictably, but today is tomorrow's history.

Tamworth has witnessed many changes: Romans, Saxons and Danes, fire and plague, agriculture and heavy industry to its current situation as, basically, a dormitory town for Birmingham's industry and commerce.

Tamworth needs to think outside the traditional box(es) and also look to modern ideas as it did in the past. However it needs to take its traditions and heritage with it.

Whilst Tamworth celebrates Mercia, the town was also in the Dame Law for a considerable time.

Two of Tamworth's "Mercian" hero's, Aethelflad and Aethelstan, were actually Wessex Royalty and when the last King of Mercia died they effectively ran it as a vassal state of Wessex.

Another Tamworth Hero is Sir Robert Peel (well, one of the seven of them) based at Drayton Manor, hence the Peel Society being based in Tamworth. Though, when the Peels branched out into politics, they spent most of their time in London.

The Holloway Society has been working with the Peel Society to digitise the 1895-1899 "party Album" of Evelyn Peel in her tour around the great country houses between her coming out and getting married to Sir Macleay.

The Album needs a lot of restoration and conservation work so the Holloway Society arranged for the British Library to take charge of the album to restore it. This will take some time as, ironically, the British Library's conservation suite is being err... renovated.



Roger Bragger,, Peel Soc. at British Library with Peel Album



The Holloway Society expect to have an inexpensive full size (A3 Landscape) printed copy available soon.

Additionally the Holloway Society also has a team researching the album to produce a commentary on the people, places, photos, artwork and other artefacts in the album. We are in a race with the British Library to identify a child identified only as "Fatty" in one of the pictures.

The more visible side of the Holloway Society has been some events we have done in the last few months. As you can see above and right. We are flexible having our own tables and gazebo.

The event above is the Support Staffordshire event in Ankerside and the one to the right is supporting Mental Health Awareness in the Castle Grounds.

On which note: keeping your mind agile keeps you young and helps your mental health in general. Try some research for the Holloway Society!

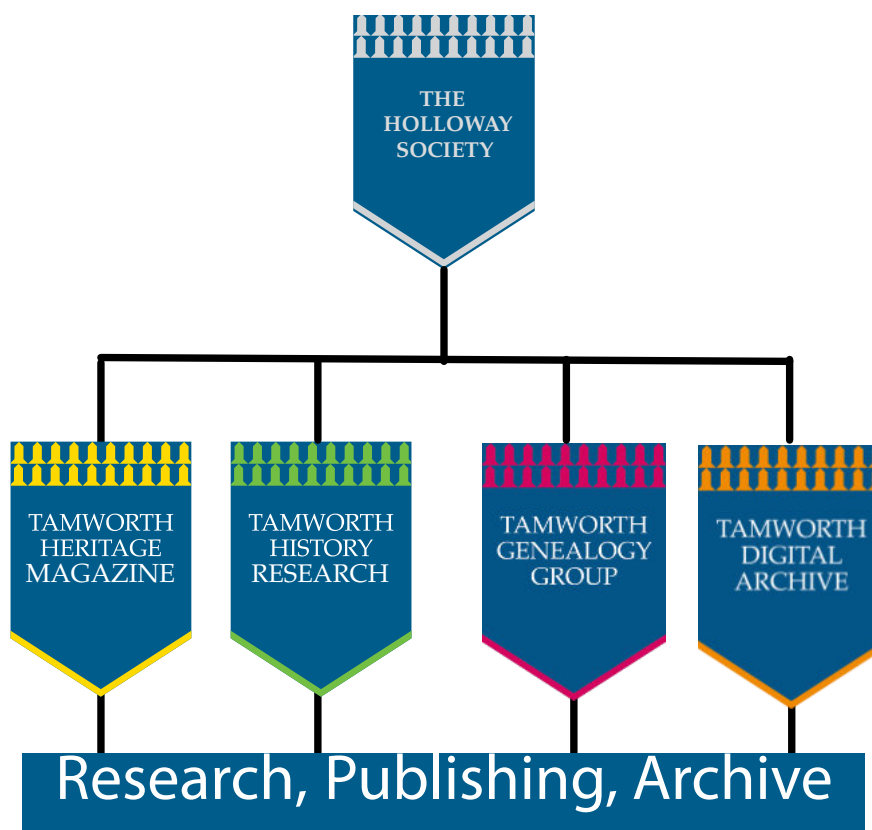
Several other events we were due to go to got cancelled due to the heat wave(s) but we will be doing more in the coming months. Hopefully we will see some of our readers at an event.

If you see us do please come and say hello and maybe even become a member (or [see page 44](#)). We are making a lot of progress but we still need people to help with the projects.

We will always need people because the number of possible projects about the last 2,000 years of Tamworth and its people is almost infinite!

There is bound to be something there that interests you. As mentioned on [page 44](#) we need a range of production, video, software and other skills apart from an interest in heritage!





This is the important thing about the Holloway Society it is a broad Society and looks at history, people and all aspects of local life. Local is including all the villages. In the last issue we concluded a nine part series on Elford. Are there any stories from other villages?

It is the details of everyday life that matter. Nothing is too obscure. One of the joys of being Editor is getting random emails from two separate people each with a snippet of an idea or information that I can put together and: The whole is greater than the sum of the parts! Now have someone looking at the post offices of Tamworth assisted by someone whose interest is postmarks!

There are all sorts of aspects of life for example this picture we believe is from Church Street. Does anyone know who it is and when it might be? We know it is after 1860 but that is all.

Little pieces of the puzzle fit together for a complete picture and the problem we have is the more of the picture we can see the more we want to delve and research come and join us [Persequimur allecibus rubrum in cavernis leporis.](#)



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The Mayor's Retrospective by Chris Bain

Cllr Chris Bain Mayor of Tamworth 2025-2026
© Mayors Diary

It has been both a pleasure and a privilege to serve as Mayor of Tamworth over the past year. (May 2025 to May 2026) I have witnessed some remarkable work being delivered by our voluntary and community groups and met many inspirational individuals along the way.

The highlights of my tenure include: Switching on the Christmas Lights with Jack the Mini Medic;
Attending the 1100th Anniversary of Athelstan's coronation in Kingston upon Thames;
Opening the Fairground Attraction Museum at Statfold Park;
Receiving a kiss from one of the D-Day Darlings;
Supporting the British Legion and the Staffordshire 3;
Participating in the Spirit of Tamworth Awards;
Engaging with students at Landau Forte and so much more.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to several individuals; Maureen Carlsen, for graciously serving as my Consort; Archie Allsopp, for being an exceptional Mayor's Cadet; Roger, Gabriel, and Pete, for their invaluable support as attendants; Tracey Pointon, for expertly managing the Mayor's

Diary; Stephen Gabriel and the Executive team, and my fellow councillors for their support and forbearance during Council meetings.

Most importantly, I want to express my gratitude to the people of Tamworth for their warm welcome, which has made my experience enjoyable and fulfilling.

Looking forward, throughout my year I aimed to promote the Spirit and the Heritage of Tamworth. We have a remarkable history that stretches back for more than a millennium.

A Saxon and Mercian heritage brought to life by the Castle and it's surrounds, we honour that heritage by celebrating the life and achievements of people such as King Offa, Aethelflaed and Athelstan.

We also have a storied more recent history which includes giant figures such as Baldwin de Witney, Sir Thomas Guy, Sir Robert Peel and Colin Grazier.

Tamworth's story continues to be written...

Continues on next page.

Staffordshire 3 Monument
© Tamworth Digital Archive



We have new, powerful, memorials such as the "Oaths taken, Oaths fulfilled" memorial to be found on the lower lawn (see above) and the Unity Shield at the Castle itself. It is my hope that all of this will inspire future generations to be proud to call Tamworth their home and make them want to build their lives here.

Looking back on my year I am left in no doubt that we could make far more of our incredible, indeed some would say unique, heritage.

Aethelflaed Stature at Tamworth Railway Station
© Tamworth Digital Archive)



One simple way is to be far more imaginative with the place names we adopt. Why not have an Offa Place or a Baldwin de Witney Square? It would cost very little and perhaps spark some interest in the origins of those names, generate a real sense of place for Tamworth. That will be needed if we become a smaller part of much larger administrations.

We could be more ambitious in terms of public works of art. We have statues of Aethelflaed and Sir Robert Peel, but very little about King Offa for example. Offa's Palace was so lavish for the time it was described as a wonder. Yet how many people know much about it today?



King Offa Coin
© Tamworth Digital Archive)

I did have an idea about starting a project to construct a replica of the Palace and use it as a heritage centre to sit alongside, and in partnership with, our magnificent Castle, but the idea foundered on the twin rocks of austerity and

risk aversion. Now that I am freed of Mayoral commitments it is an idea I would be very interested in developing. It does grate a little that there is an effigy of King Offa on the West facade of Lichfield Cathedral not in Tamworth.

More recently Hints Hall, which was demolished in 1966, was the home of Sir John Floyer (1639-1734), the first physician to recognise the importance of measuring the human pulse in diagnosing illness. A key historical figure, not really recognised in our town. A simple plaque could change that. I could go on.



Hints Hall. © Tamworth Digital Archive)

Tamworth has an industrial heritage which included logistics, engineering, clothing, brick, tile and paper manufacture. Most notably until 2001 one of its factories was Reliant which produced the Reliant Robin three-wheeler car so beloved of Del Trotter and the Reliant Scimitar sports car. There is also a heritage of canals and marinas, originally intended to support industries in the area, they were the arteries of commerce, but now more dedicated to leisure boating. How much do people know about it? Could we do more to tell them?

Tamworth has an amazing history and an incredible community spirit; I saw that spirit in so many communities and individuals across the town. It is so important for the future that this spirit is celebrated and nurtured.



D-Day Darlings © Mayors Diary



Riding for Mental Health Awareness © Tamworth Digital Archive)

Reliant body production © Tamworth Digital Archive)



We must also continue to foster an environment in which small businesses can thrive and grow. With the right support they can provide jobs and careers for local people, essential if want our town to prosper and grow.

As Tamworth prepares for the upcoming reorganisation of Local Government, we must make clear who we are and what our aspirations are. The Heritage and Spirit of Tamworth must remain at the core of all that we do.

I sought to promote Tamworth as a serious participant in the huge changes that are coming, and I hope that ambition can be carried forward. I am in no doubt that the future holds exciting possibilities—*let us all get ready for them!*



St Editha's South side
(Tamworth Digital Archive)

Baldwin de Witney was Vicar of St Editha's from 1329 - 1369 and you will note from list below that he was responsible for rebuilding the Church following the fire.

Dean Baldwin de Witney (Whitney) was a 14th century clergyman of great influence. He was the Dean of the College of Canons and was responsible for overseeing the rebuilding of St Editha's Church following the great fire in 1345. Transforming it into the impressive building with its Gothic edifice that we know today. It is the largest parish church in Staffordshire. Baldwin de Witney was born c. 1311 in Whitney, Herefordshire. He died c. 1368 aged 57 in Whitney, Herefordshire. (Yes we noticed the discrepancy in the dates too)

Baldwin was the son of Eustace I de Whitney, Lord of Pencombe, Little Cowan and Whitney and an unknown de Whitney.

Matthew	1257	Samuel Hodgkinson	1610-1629
Ralph de Wapport in reign of Edward 1		Thomas Blake	1629-1657
John de Esford	1292-	Christopher Lord	1643-1650
Roger le Wape	- 1305	Samuel Langley	1657-1662
Walter de Sedeswode	1305-1310	Ralph Coste	1662-1663
Hugh de Sabynston	1310-1316	Samuel Langley	1663-1691
Derry de Chiff	1316-	Samuel Collins	1691-1710
Isambert de Loggahilla	1320-1328	George Christophus	1710-1721
Richard de Clouestre	1328	Robert Wilsby	1721-1758
Robert Cusi de Clonside	1329	Samuel Collins	1758-1761
Baldwin de Witney	1329-1369	William Sawrey	1759-1792
Walter Wyde	1369	Michael Saxter	1792-1796
Reginald de Hulton	1372-1389	Francis Stiel	1796-1812
Thomas Jerns	1389	Robert E. Savage	1812-1815
William Cottingham	1390	Edward Foxston	1815-1851
John de Wessingham	1391-1399	John Haxell	1851-1865
John Bernard	1399	James D. Millar	1865-1869
William Humpfreys	1403	Richard Rowle	1869-1872
Clarence Deynton	1428-1429	Brooke Lambert	1872-1878
Thomas Rodebourne	1429	William MacGregor	1878-1887
John Delabere	1432-1431	Ernest G. Chatcher	1887-1890
William Tooper	1431-1436	Edward Dewing Collock	1890-1896
John Gate	1436-1479	J.H. Courtney Clarke	1896-1915
Ralph Ferrers	1479-1501	Leslie Maurice S. Piel	1915-1917
Thomas Bowde	1501-	Herbert G. Rosher	1917-1922
William Litchfield	- 1512	Ernest Deryn Rogers	1922-1936
Sumfrey Wyntow	1512-1514	Arthur McInery Coony	1936-1919
William House	1511-1522	George Eulbert Satter	1950-1955
Richard Dawson	1522-1525	Alfred Jones	1955-1961
Thomas Parler	1525	Albert Edwards	1965-1986
Samuel Symonds	1538 call. 1517-1548	John Anderson Widdas	1986-1996
John Wright	1578	Alan Barrett	1997-2013
Roger Molde	1578-1610	Alan Gordon	2015-2020

Clr Chris Bain, Mayor of Tamworth 2025-26 is set to be the penultimate Mayor of Tamworth.

Due to the change from a Borough or town council of local councillors to a Unitary Authority covering a large part of the county Tamworth is losing its Borough Council and Mayor in 2027/8.

The first of 148 Tamworth Mayors was R Nevill in 1835 the last will be 2026/7.

Those taking note will realise that Tamworth has had Mayors for 192 years but only 148 different Mayors. This is because many served 2 or 3 terms as Mayor. So as it stands Tamworth will make neither 200 years of Mayors nor 150 different Mayors.

It should also be noted Tamworth's first female Mayor was Alice Argyle in 1937. She became a Councillor in 1930 only just 2 years after women got the vote in England. Tamworth has had 15 female Mayors. The office is *Mayor* regardless of the gender of the holder. A Lady Mayoress is the Consort of a Lord Mayor. Which is not the same as a town Mayor.

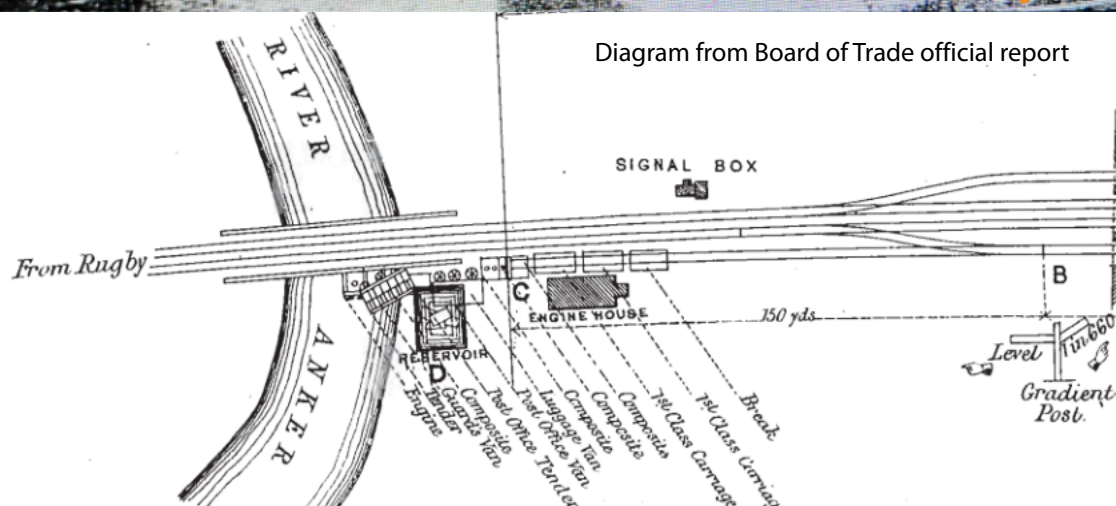
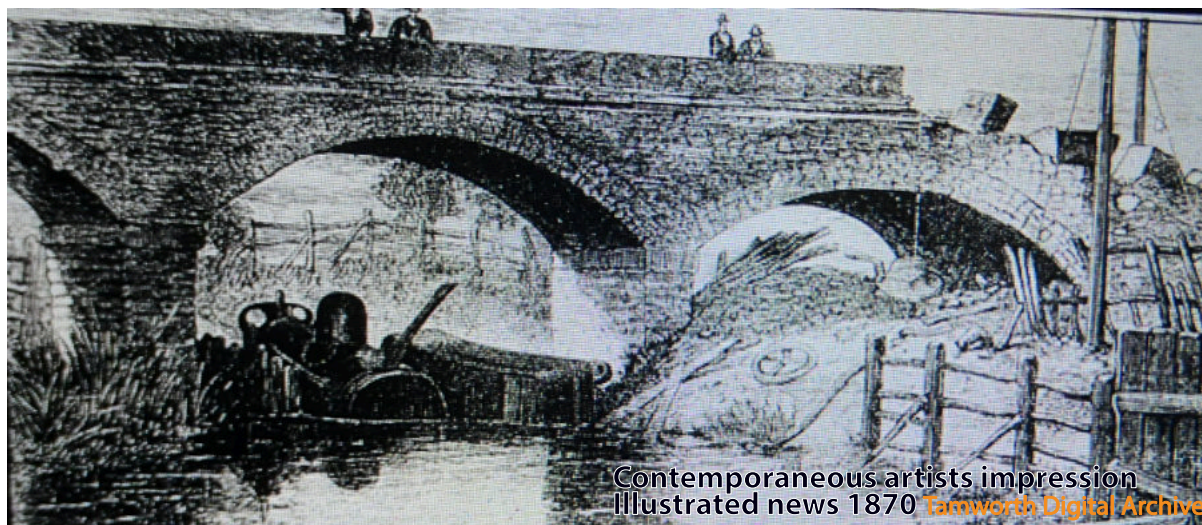
Prior to 1835 Tamworth's civic head was the Bailiff and the title can be traced back to c.1243 being held by William Taylor and Adam Palmer.

Miss Alice Argyle, Mayor 1936
(Tamworth Digital Archive)



A Tamworth Tragedy: The Irish Mail Train

by Gareth Jones



It's 3.30am on Wednesday September 14th 1870. In those days there was a substantial amount of traffic running overnight and the London & North Western Railway staff on the lower-level platforms at Tamworth Railway Station were going about their routine business. But little did they know that a disaster was about to ensue.

This is my version of what happened on that fateful night. It relies essentially on the official Accident Report, various contemporary articles in the Tamworth Herald and a brief summary of the incident in L.T.C. Rolt's book about railway accidents: 'Red For Danger'.

There are numerous accounts of what and how it happened, but I've not seen any detail of what followed afterwards to the man found responsible, so here it is as well.

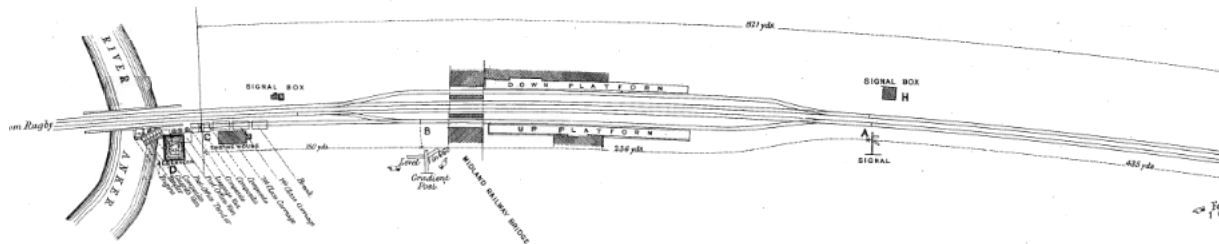
The Context

To set the scene and help explain the context for what was about to happen, in those days there were only two through running (or 'fast') lines at Tamworth station, the up (to London) and down (to Stafford, Crewe and beyond). NOTE By convention lines are always "up" to London and lines away from London are "down" lines.

The platforms (now 2 & 1 respectively) being served by siding 'loop' lines, with point connections from the main lines at each end.

The platforms were much shorter than today, those at the south end of the station ending just beyond the Midland Railway over-bridge; those to the north were probably at least half the length as they are now.

Diagram from Board of Trade official report



Note This is an over bridge.

Fast trains used the through lines whilst the two platform lines were used by stopping goods and passenger trains. From the southbound loop a 'dead end' siding extended about 150 yards terminating at the bridge over the River Anker.

The siding was used for wagons conveying fuel for a stationary steam engine housed in a substantial brick building, which pumped water into an adjacent 13ft deep reservoir measuring about 40ft x 30ft. This supplied a water crane for the steam locomotives to replenish their tanks as required. The siding ended with a timber-lined, earth-filled buffer stop just before the river bank.

The points into and out of the platform lines were controlled by separate signal boxes at the north and south ends of the station, both on the 'town' or south side.

The south end points were interlocked so that if they were set for a through train the platform line points would be automatically set for the fuel siding to prevent any train leaving the platform from colliding with a train on the fast line.

However, there was no interlocking between the north and south points to ensure that they were both set for the same line: each signalman was responsible for communicating with the other by gong and disc indicators in the signal box and setting the points and signals at 'their' end correctly.

The gongs were operated by signal levers in the boxes, sounded once for a through train and twice for a platform line train, acknowledged by the display of a lever-operated disc set from the receiving signal box.

The two signal boxes were not visible to each other due to the station buildings and the Midland Railway bridge (the 'top' line: now platforms 3 & 4). To the north west (the down line) visibility for both signal boxes was poor, being obstructed by the Gungate road bridge.

For drivers of trains approaching from the north west the view of the station was also impaired, by Gungate bridge, by what was then known as Mace's Bridge (where the present day pedestrian footbridge connects Ludgate to Tennyson Avenue), and the curve which runs through a cutting.

There were two outer signals, the first of which was an advance 'distant' visible from about half a mile away at which drivers would whistle to alert the station staff of their approach, once for the through line and twice for the platform.

A second intermediate "distant" signal was located just south of Gungate bridge which indicated to drivers whether both lines through the station were clear. A third 'home' signal was located some 400 yards from the points into the platform line and had two signal arms. One of which would be lowered to show which line the train was to take.

This was the first and only indication that drivers would actually see whether they would enter the platform or run through on the fast line.

An electric telegraph system, which would provide the signalmen with advance warning of approaching trains when several miles away, had just been installed in their boxes and had been used for practising by day, but was not yet operational. It was, however, functioning in the *station building* but the signalmen would have no

such advance warning unless the staff in the station communicated with them. Crucially though, there was not yet a Company Rule or instruction for them to do so.

Therefore the signalmen could only rely upon their knowledge of the timetable, their expectation of which train was due at any given time and by the sounding of the engine whistle, as to which road they should set their points for. Critically, this method of operation could not take account of any late running of trains or other changes to the timetable. Neither were the signalmen provided with Company watches, they had to rely on their own.

The Accident

So what exactly happened on that dark September morning?

The famed Irish Mail had left Holyhead for London at 12.13am, 18 minutes late due to a delay to the mail-boat from Kingstown (renamed Dún Laoghaire in 1920). The train comprised 11 coaches including brake vans at the front and rear and two Post Office vehicles. The train stopped at Stafford for a change of locomotive (identified in one report as 'Stevenson 279') and a fresh crew from Stafford took over.

The driver, Samuel Taylor, was aged 45 and lived in Ingestre Road whilst his fireman, William Davis, was 21 and lived in Russel Street; both streets were within close vicinity of Stafford station and indeed still exist today. Usually the Mail was preceded by a goods train from Manchester which stopped at Tamworth, but on this morning, fatefully, it was dispatched first, departing 14 minutes late at 3.37am. It was due to pass through Tamworth without stopping at 3.56am, but was still running behind time, as it approached the station at 4.09am, due as always to run through on the fast line.

The signalman in the north box was Alfred Evans who was in his mid-twenties; he had worked for the Company for 14 years and for six years in this box. He worked a 12 hour shift and had come on duty at 6.30pm that evening. Evans had set the platform line for the Manchester goods train which was timetabled to arrive well before the Mail.

James Higgins was the signalman in the south box, he'd worked for the Company for 24 years,

5 of which were at Tamworth, and for 6 months in this box. He had had the points set for the through line for some 16 minutes, so the interlocking meant that the platform road was open to the fuel siding. A trap was thus set for the unsuspecting driver of the Mail.

On the engine, as Driver Taylor was approaching Tamworth, he would have seen both advance signals, the second of which indicated that the road through the station was clear, so expecting the usual run along the fast line, he kept his regulator open without reducing his (estimated) speed of 45 mph. However, only after passing under Gungate bridge and some 400 yards (about 20 seconds) or so from the points would he have seen the home signal indicating he was set for the platform.

He must have been horrified. Taylor sounded an alarm whistle and applied the engine brakes but there was over 83 tons of train pushing him on, and the rails were slippery that night after some heavy rain. The front guard, John Reeve, felt a lurch as the train ran over the points and into the platform; from his van he applied the continuous brakes on the train. The application of both locomotive and train brakes reduced speed to around 15mph (witness estimates vary). But this was to no avail, disaster was now inevitable.

With sparks flying from the train's brake blocks the engine mounted and ran over the buffer stop, falling 24 yards beyond it into the middle of the river some 20 feet below, on its wheels but at right-angles to the track. The tender fell on its side, facing the opposite direction. The first seven coaches piled up around the reservoir and the remains of the buffer stop, suffering varying degrees of damage whilst the rear four remained unscathed on their wheels in the siding.

Driver Taylor had fallen against a bridge pier (it was speculated that he may have jumped off his engine first) and died shortly afterwards with head and crushing injuries. Fireman Smith was found dead in the water with a broken leg. Amazingly there was only one other fatality, a 33 year old Roman Catholic Priest, Rev. Father Healy, who was returning from a mission in Ireland with his Superior. He was found underwater in the river, severely injured and with both thighs broken.

Most of the 27 passengers were travelling in the rear part of the train and only ten, one of whom fell into the reservoir and had to swim to safety,



were injured. Guard Reeve ended up in the river floating on part of the roof of his severely damaged brake van and suffered a head injury and severe bruising to most of his body. Fortunately no fire had broken out otherwise there would have been many more fatalities. In due course a train was summoned from Rugby to take the passengers and mail on to London, arriving there at around 10.30am.

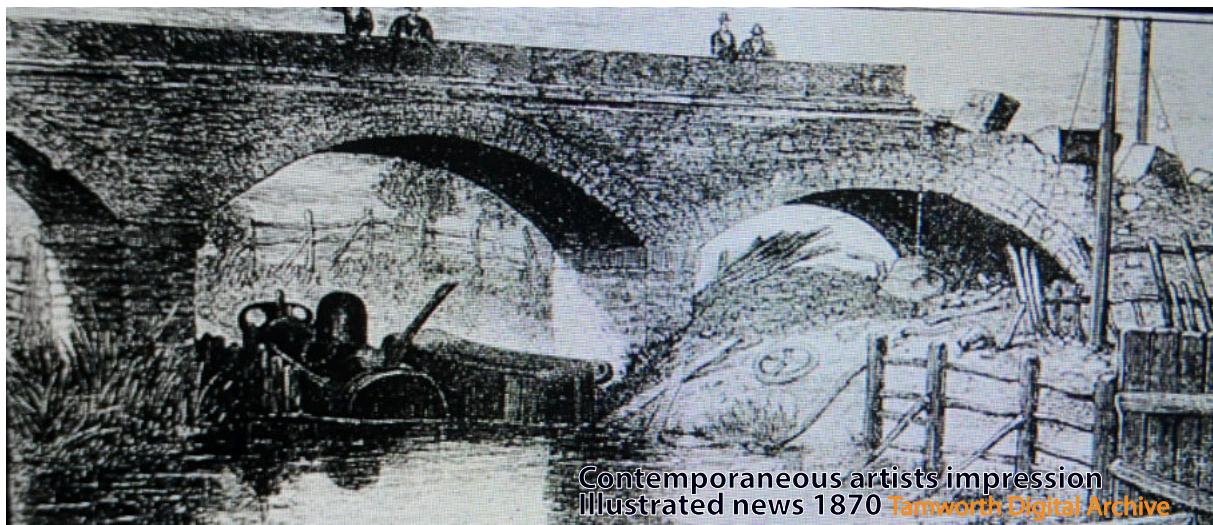
News travelled fast by telegraph and no doubt locally by word of mouth. As early as 6am locals were gathering at the site. It was reported that there was 'intense excitement' in Birmingham and that 'an immense concourse of people besieged the place', including sightseers from there and from Stafford, Rugby, Burton and

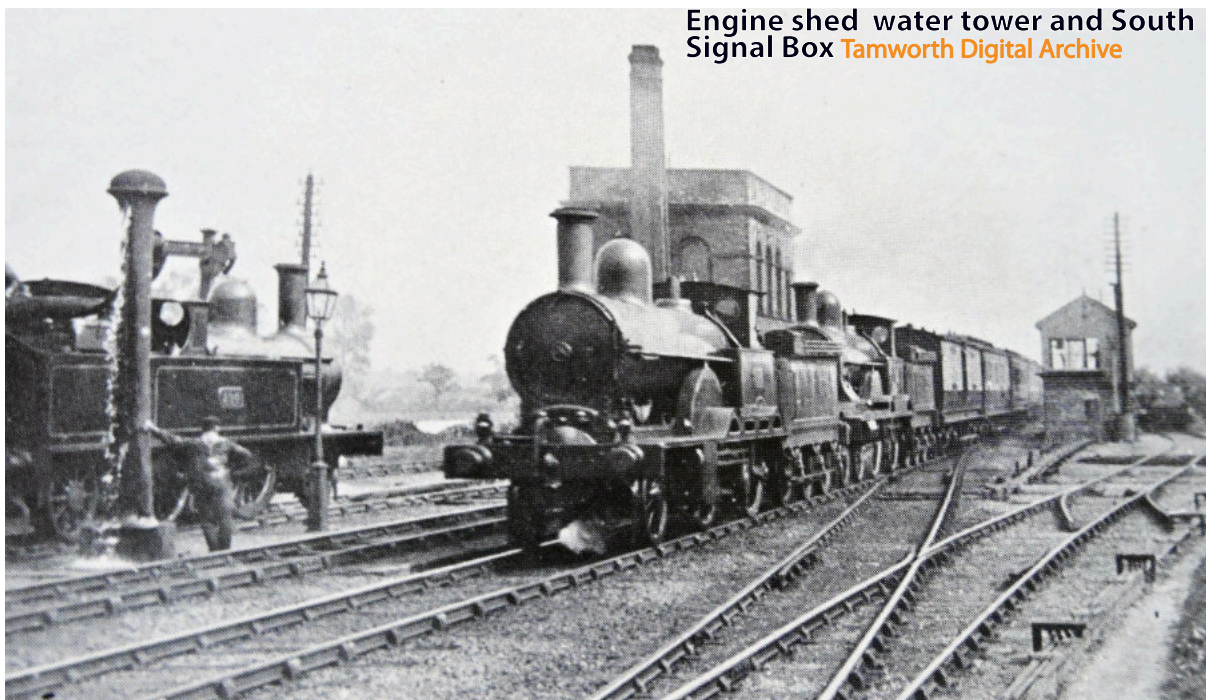
Wolverhampton.

Railway staff and later the police were needed to keep order and ensure the safety of the onlookers since trains continued to run through the station, albeit at reduced speed.

Salvage work commenced the same morning. The Company Chairman lived close to Tamworth station and soon arrived to supervise clearance work, operations to recover the bodies and attend to the injured. The Company's Locomotive Superintendent travelled down from Crewe by special train to assist.

Track gangs from Tamworth, Stafford and Rugby got to work on clearing the wreckage. Bonfires were lit to illuminate the site during the





Engine shed water tower and South Signal Box Tamworth Digital Archive

following night. The river was dragged by boat and the reservoir was drained to recover mail, luggage and belongings and to check that no other bodies were in there. The engine and tender were removed from the river on Sunday 18th September. The loco was found to have its brakes hard on but damaged, and still in forward gear.

As news spread the accident attracted the interest of the press from further afield; articles appeared, for example, in the Stratford on Avon Herald, the Derby Mercury, the Manchester Weekly Times and the Barnsley Chronicle; there would, no doubt, be many others.

The Investigation

The Railway Department of the Board of Trade immediately appointed an Inspector, Captain H.W Tyler, to carry out an Inquiry and this he did promptly the very next day, Thursday September 15th. Indeed he took less than 24 hours to travel to the site, interview the two signalmen, the two guards and a yard foreman who witnessed the crash and write his report.

Evans made a detailed statement in the presence of his solicitor and explained why he had left the points set for the platform line.

Accident Report from Birmingham Daily Post Tamworth Digital Archive

SHOCKING ACCIDENT
TO THE
IRISH MAIL AT TAMWORTH.

THE TRAIN THROWN INTO THE RIVER.

THREE PERSONS KILLED.

The Irish Mail service of the London and North Western Company seems to have been born to misfortune—misfortune, too, of the most serious and unusual character. Little more than two years ago, at Abergele, a train, with about 30 passengers, perished by fire, the result of a collision with a “goods” laden with petroleum; to-day we have to tell of the total wreck of another train, the circumstances of which are quite as terrible, though happily the loss of life is not so great. The mail, which leaves Holyhead at about midnight, was, yesterday morning, turned off its track at Tamworth station, and by its own momentum was precipitated—engine, carriages, and all—into and upon the banks of the River Anker. The following are the details of the catastrophe: they may not be precisely accurate in every particular, but where they are not, it is due either to the confusion which confounded incidents and facts in the minds of the early witnesses of the scene of the accident, or to the perverse and stupid reticence of the railway officials, who were instructed to know nothing of the disaster, and who obeyed their instructions most strictly. The Irish limited mail, consisting of an engine and tender, guard’s van, travelling post-office, and tender, and seven or eight passenger carriages, left Holyhead at 11:55 on Tuesday night. It reached Stafford without mishap, and left for Rugby at 3:23. Calculating the time allowed for running over the Trent Valley, the speed at this time would be about 50 miles an hour, but near Tamworth the rate would be somewhat accelerated on account of an incline and the level running which succeeds. The train was due to pass Tamworth at 3:38, and its appointed track was by the centre metals. The pointsman on duty, however, mistaking—as it is said—the train for a “goods,” which he knew to be due, opened the points of a siding by the platform, at the end of which is, or rather was, a “buffer block.” This siding is at the top of a steep incline, leading first to a reservoir,

He had expected the goods train from Manchester which was due to reach Tamworth around 3am and always ran into the platform line. A train had previously run through the platform so he left the points for the goods to do so. He lowered the 'home' signal to indicate that the driver was permitted to enter the platform.

However, by 3.30am the goods had still not arrived. In the absence of any communication about any change to the usual sequence of trains, Evans presumed that the goods would still arrive before the Irish Mail. So he left his points set for the platform road. At 3.50am (by his watch) and literally in the dark about which train(s) were approaching, he realised that the Mail was within minutes of being due. Realising he must change the points and signals for the fast line he said that as he went to do so he saw a white light (carried on the front of the locomotive) emerging from under Gungate bridge.

As the goods would have carried a green light, and having heard no whistle for the through line (the reports do not say if he heard two whistles), Evans assumed that this must be a light engine (the name used for a locomotive on its own). So he left the points as they were. He said that he sounded the gong twice to alert Higgins in the south box to expect a train on the platform line. Then immediately he realised that this was not a single engine, it was actually the Irish Mail.

The engine whistled as it passed his box but it was now too late to change his points: by now the train was running over them. He claimed that he gave two more gongs to Higgins, hoping he

would alter the points at the south end of the platform (which were set for the fuel siding) to route the train back onto the fast line and safety.

He then checked his watch to find it had stopped at 3.50am so must have been some 19 minutes or so behind time; he mentioned that it had gone well since a repair about a year earlier.

Higgins, in his evidence, said that he was pre-occupied by a northbound goods train from Polesworth which was heading towards him at the same time; he and the yard foreman who was nearby had heard only one gong from Evans. He saw the Mail running through the platform but his points were locked for the fuel siding; it would have been possible to move his own levers but he had no time to do so before the Mail ran into the fuel siding.

Tyler produced his complete and very detailed report which is dated the same day! He concluded that there were three immediate causes of the accident:

- (1) Evans' mistake in setting the points incorrectly
- (2) insufficient warning to the driver to enable him to stop short of the points and
- (3) the want of extra mechanical locking between the north and south signalmen to prevent the possibility of Evans' mistake.

He pointed out the dangers from the inadequacy of information about train movements and the defects of the signalling and interlocking arrangements.



Aerial view looking towards London: the main line has four lines, but the platforms have yet to be extended. The original fuel siding now forms part of the new 'up' line and a new, curved siding installed to serve the pump-house. The Western Curve connecting the two main lines can just be seen below. [Tamworth Digital Archive](#)

Such speed of response now seems incredible: these days serious railway incidents are carried out by the Rail Accident Investigation Branch (RAIB) who can take months or sometimes over a year before publishing their findings. The full Report is still available [click here](#) to download it. There is also This is also an interesting analysis from Warwick Uni [click here](#)

The Inquest

As Tyler commenced his investigation an Inquest was opened at the Town Hall by the Coroner for North Warwickshire, Mr T Dewes, the jury having been sworn in at the Tweedale Arms where the bodies lay. The jury first visited the site of the crash and the signalling system was explained to them. By then, signalman Evans was in custody. He was represented by Mr T Argyle, solicitor from Tamworth, whilst the Railway Company was also legally represented. Various witnesses were called to give evidence.



A 1960's view of the pump-house before demolition: the fuel siding has been removed and the platforms extended. The south signal box can be seen on the right of the picture. [Tamworth Digital Archive](#)

The Inquest could not be completed on the day and was adjourned until Saturday 24th September. Evans declined to make any statement, relying on Mr Argyle to represent him. In one of his submissions to the jury Argyle said that it seemed astonishing that Evans, 'the man responsible for setting the points correctly', was never informed that the Mail had left Stafford before the goods. The two staff in the telegraph office in the station confirmed that they had known this, and had completed the train register accordingly. One confirmed that he had not contacted Evans whilst the other stated that it was 'no part of my duty' to communicate with the points men.

The jury was told that the rules were that no train should be turned off the main line until the signalman was fully satisfied as to the description of the approaching train and has received the required signal from the driver; in other words the default points setting was for the main line.

After hours of examination and cross-examination of witnesses the jury were unable to reach a verdict and the Coroner threatened to adjourn to Warwick Assizes and bind the jurors to appear there. But to avoid that he offered them an hour or so to see if they could agree a verdict: either murder (the negligence of the Company through the malice of an individual), manslaughter (culpable negligence of any individual) or accidental death (if simply a mistake).

The jury returned quite soon, agreeing unanimously that Evans was culpable of the manslaughter of the three dead men. The Coroner agreed that it was the only verdict they could reach. So Evans was committed to Warwick Assizes for trial and bailed for £100 with sureties of £25 for each of the three counts (this equates to around £27000 in today's money!). The entire sitting had taken over nine hours.

The Trial

Evans' trial was held in the Crown Court before Mr Justice Brett, on March 1st 1871. Both he and the Railway Company had legal representation. Much of the proceedings went over ground already covered in the Inquest. The Herald's account was rather brief and lacking much detail. However it did say that the Company's Signalling Inspector advised that trains intending to stop at Tamworth ought by the rules to whistle twice as they approached the outer distant signal and that if Evans had expected the goods first he ought not to have set the points for the platform until he had heard that double whistle, nor without sounding his gong.

For Evans it was submitted that he was not guilty of culpable negligence, at most his was an error of judgement: his intention was to turn the goods into the platform then set the points for the main line for the Mail.

After the hearing the Judge's summing up the jury returned a verdict of not guilty on all three counts of manslaughter. He was acquitted and discharged.

Conclusion

My feelings about the outcome are these: It does seem clear that Evans had not followed the Company rules about leaving his points open for the fast line until alerted otherwise by the whistle of an approaching train (but the accounts do not record whether the driver had done so).

Rather, Evans was relying on his knowledge of the train timings when he left the points for the platform, and seems to have adopted a rather complacent attitude to the rules. Such 'pragmatic' local practices were not uncommon in those days (and indeed well into the 20th Century) and were sometimes ignored by management. But nevertheless all this rather counts against him.

On the other hand I think he was let down on a number of counts. It is quite shocking to me that the station staff were not instructed to communicate train movements, of which they were fully aware by telegraph, with the signalmen responsible for setting the correct road. Evans was thus left in complete ignorance of which train was approaching him.

Moreover, the first indication to the driver of a train which was to enter the platform was the home signal so close to the points: neither of the two outer signals provided any such indication. This gave the unsuspecting Mail driver extremely short notice, about 20 seconds, of the change to his normal route.

There were no locking arrangements between the north and south signals and points and the methods of communication between the two boxes were rather rudimentary.

Tamworth Station 1850s Tamworth Digital Archive



Finally, Evans was relying on his own watch which he claimed had stopped and it seems surprising that Company timepieces were not supplied to its staff with such time-critical duties. Or indeed a clock in the signal box.

Whilst these circumstances reflect the progress of railway signalling here at the time, which was being improved, these factors are mitigation for Evans' actions in my opinion.

So on balance, I felt quite sorry for him and was quite pleased to find that, despite the Coroners' comment and his apparent breach of rules, the jury decided to acquit him.

I have yet to find anything about what happened to Evans after his trial. I wonder what happened to him ... was he dismissed by the Company and if so did he find another occupation? If so what was it? Assuming he lived locally, is there a grave somewhere in Tamworth? I think it would be interesting to find out!

EDITOR: If any one has any information on Evans after the accident or would like to research it please contact the Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk

You can read the full Accident Report via the following link: [Click here](#) You can view the *Birmingham Daily Gazette* reports by clicking on [the accident \(15th September 1870\)](#) and [Higgins' trial \(4th March 1871\)](#)

'Red For Danger' by LTC Rolt can still be purchased ([click here](#) or look on Amazon) and contains fascinating accounts of railway accidents of all types.

JOINT ISOLATION HOSPITAL FOR INFECTIOUS DISEASES

By Jill Gadsby



On 5 February 1887, at a meeting of the Tamworth Rural Sanitary Authority, the need for an isolation hospital for the town was discussed. It was accepted that it would be prudent to have a hospital ready and waiting, to which any first cases showing signs of an infectious disease could be promptly removed, in an attempt to stop what might become a serious epidemic. It was thought unlikely that one would be provided at that time.

A letter to the Town Council dated 5 April 1887 was read out at the Council's meeting. It was from the Local Government Board in respect of the provision of hospital accommodation for the isolation of cases of infectious diseases. The Town Clerk was instructed to reply that the matter was being considered by the Council.

During 1888 discussions and letters passed between the Board of Guardians, the Urban Sanitary Authority, the Rural Sanitary Authority and the Local Government Board regarding who was responsible for the care of those in isolation,

where they should be looked after, who was responsible for paying for their care and the need for an isolation hospital.

At a meeting, of the Tamworth Rural Sanitary Authority, reported in the Tamworth Herald on the 2 March 1889, discussions took place as to whether two authorities, Urban Sanitary Authority and the Rural Sanitary Authority could be amalgamated with a view to looking into the construction of a hospital for the isolation of contagious diseases.

During 1890 and 1891 the Infectious Hospital Joint Committee held meetings and it was at one such meeting a proposal was accepted that an offer of £400 should be made to a Mr Cook and Mr Mann for the purchase of a field they owned in Glascote, on which a hospital could be erected. The offer was rejected as the owners wanted £500 for the land. At a meeting of the Town Council on the 19 March 1891 the isolation hospital scheme was shelved.

Zymotic Diseases in 1888

Disease	Number of Deaths	Where	Outcome
Small Pox	0	Family at Alders	Family Isolated and treated. Disease did not spread
Measles	7	Epidemic at Wilnecote which spread to Fazeley	Early January schools were closed. 3 children died. A child also died at Mount Pleasant, Castle Liberty and a further 3 in Fazeley.
	5	Croxall, Edingale & Hurley	Schools were closed. 5 children from two families died in Hurley.
		Kettlebrook	In October a fresh outbreak occurred in children attending Kettlebrook Infants School.
	2	Amington	Whilst in Amington, during a time when Chicken Pox was also prevalent 2 deaths were registered.
		Newton Regis, Seckington and No Man's Heath	The schools at were also closed due to the epidemic.
Scarlet Fever	1	Case at Canwell	Child died
		Haunton	In a family of 8 people, the mother & all 6 children were affected. Food & other requirements were provided by the Board of Guardians. It was this case that prompted the Board of Guardians to suggest that any house or cottage that was infected be turned into a hospital for the isolation of diseases. Any relief to the inmates should be provided by the officials of the Rural Sanitary Authority and not by the Relieving Officer of the Board of Guardians.
		Perrycrofts	In August a child, on its return from Yorkshire, was ill with the disease.
Diphtheria	1		A 5 year old child who had travelled from a distance brought the disease.
	1	Croxall	A water supply used by several families was found to be impure.
		Kettlebrook	An outbreak in November at Stonehouses,
Croup	4		Four deaths occurred, 2 from one family in Fazeley.
Whooping Cough			Was prevalent during the Autumn months
Enteric Fever			No deaths recorded
Diarrhoea	9		8 deaths took place in Wigginton, Wilnecote, Kingbury & Drayton and 1 in Fazeley in the early part of the year.
Rheumatic Fever	1	Harlaston	
Erysipelas	1	Kettlebrook	
Puerperal Fever	5		2 deaths in Wilnecote
Phthisis (TB)	14		
Bronchitis, Pneumonia & Pleurisy	43		
Heart Disease	12		
Accident or injury	7		2 were bathing fatalities

Tamworth Rural Sanitary Authority met in November 1892 and the Borough Surveyor, Henry John Clarson presented to the Authority plans for an Isolation Hospital for Infectious Diseases and Administration Block for their approval. The plans were examined and passed.

A report on the 6 January 1893, in the Lichfield Mercury, records the annual progress made by Tamworth's Council. It stated that a Local Government inquiry had been held in the March of 1892 regarding an application to borrow £1,800 for the erection of a Joint Isolation Hospital. Consent had subsequently been given and a joint board had been formed. The hospital was expected to be finished in the June of 1893.

Tamworth Joint Hospital Board held their meeting in August 1893. Ten applications for the positions of superintendent and matron of the new isolation hospital were received and considered. Four applicants were interviewed. Mr and Mrs J A Crisp, formerly the master and matron of the Rugby Workhouse were appointed.

A decision to ask Mr S Fisher to open the hospital on either Monday 11 September or Wednesday 13 September was taken. In addition it was agreed that tenders from Mr J Emery of George Street to supply furniture and Messrs Clarson & Son of Market Street to supply blankets, bed linen, drapery and carpets should be accepted.

Board of the Isolation Hospital as shown in Kelly's Directory for Staffordshire 1896

Frederick Alldritt	Chairman -	Joint Isolation Hospital for Infectious Diseases
George R Shaw	Clerk -	Joint Isolation Hospital for Infectious Diseases
Henry John Clarson	Architect & Surveyor -	Joint Isolation Hospital for Infectious Diseases
John Crisp	Superintendent -	Joint Isolation Hospital for Infectious Diseases

The Joint Isolation Hospital for Infectious Diseases was on the fringes of the Warwickshire Moor, off Moor Lane, Bolehall. It was built on a piece of rising ground facing the south-west with views over the moor and River Anker towards the town and onwards to Hopwas Woods.

The builder responsible for building the hospital was Edward Williams of 43 Church Street, a local builder.

Patients, unfortunate to need care at the hospital, benefited from the soft south-westerly and westerly breezes whilst being protected from the colder north-easterly and easterly winds. It was designed by the Architect and Surveyor Henry John Clarson C.E; surveyor to the Joint Hospital Board.

The hospital was made up of 4 blocks, all substantial plain buildings constructed on foundations of 18 inches of concrete with walls of 14inch common brick and roofed with red Broseley tiles. Stone sills and headings were used for the window openings. Two of the buildings were separate. In the larger of these,

Clarson was also the surveyor to the Urban and Rural Sanitary Authorities. His interest in the sanitation of the town was possibly the reason he was involved in the design and planning arrangements for the hospital.



which was used as the hospital, the wards were 24 feet by 26 feet by 13 feet high with a nurse's room of 17 feet by 13 feet in between the two wards. Entrance to the block was from the north east side with a passage way running to the right and left allowing access to the wards and the nurse's room. On one side of the doorway was a bathroom and on the other were storerooms. At each end of the building were toilets accessible from the wards.

Hospital Ward

The second block was the convalescent ward. This was also made up of two wards with a nurse's room in the centre. The wards in this block were slightly smaller measuring 24 feet by 18 feet by 13 feet high. The nurse's room was 16 feet by 12 1/2 feet. This block was fitted with a veranda on the north-east side reaching out 8ft from the wall. Access to the wards and the nurse's room was via this veranda. In this block the nurse's room was completely isolated from the ward except for a movable window in the wall to allow the nurses to pass items between the room and the wards. The toilets were separate from the building but accessible from the veranda.

Convalescent Ward

The nurse's rooms were fitted with patent nursery gates and sinks. Heating for the buildings was supplied by Messrs. Henry & Pattison of London and their patent "hygiastic" grates were used throughout.

In the larger wards the grates were fixed in the centre of the floor. Ventilation for the wards was provided by Boyle's and Tobin's ventilators. In addition to this the top parts of all of the windows were made to open inwards. The walls of the wards were rendered with adamantine cement and painted a terracotta colour and had a dado rail making them pleasing to the eye.

A special feature in the wards was the block flooring provided by Messrs. Ebner & Co of London. The laying of the flooring being carried out by an Italian workforce. It consisted of blocks of pitch pine wood measuring 18 inches long by 3 inches wide which were laid in a "herring bone" pattern. The blocks were held down by pitch and iron keys fixed in concrete. Appliances



for the toilets were supplied by Messrs. Skey & Co, Wilnecote. It was initially intended to provide 16 beds with provision for a further 6 beds should they be required.

Hopwas water was laid on to all of the buildings. A soft water cistern which could contain 6,000 gallons was built underground between the administrative block and the laundry with pipework to both buildings. The building of the drains was given special attention and was carried out under the supervision of the Surveyor. Each drain was thoroughly disconnected and trapped. The sewerage was treated by means of an Ives' precipitating tank and the effluent flowed into the land.

Administrative Block

The buildings were approached by a 15 feet roadway which ran right around the site. The spare land on either side of the roadway was laid out partly with shrubs and partly as a kitchen garden. A 6 feet 6 inch high wall made up of 9 inch brick surrounded the site.

The cost of the buildings was as follows:-

Land	£ 300.00
Contract for Building	£1,762.00
Wall	£ 450.00
Block Flooring	£ 102.00
Heating Apparatus	£ 135.00
Laying on water, providing drains, forming roads	£ 150.00
Furniture & Linen (estimated)	£ 150.00
	<u>£3,049.00</u>



Sydney Fisher, the owner of Fishers Paper Mill in Kettlebrook, purchased the land on which the hospital was built from the Robert Peel Trustees in memory of his brother, Walter Fisher of Amington Hall, who died in 1889 aged 41. He also contributed towards the cost of the perimeter wall. The remainder of the costs were met by the parishes in the Tamworth Union,

including the borough, the contribution were in proportion to the population of each parish.

The opening ceremony took place at 3.30pm. on Monday 11 September 1893. The buildings were declared open by Sydney Fisher in recognition of him providing the land on which the hospital had been built. A plate was to be erected on the wall of the principal ward to record the fact that the land had been given in memory of the late Mr Walter Fisher. At the opening ceremony Mr E Williams, the builder, and all of the other trades people employed in the building of the hospital were acknowledged for their excellent workmanship.

The Isolation Hospital cared for patients with Tuberculosis, Diphtheria, Scarlet Fever, Small Pox to name but a few. In later years it offered 30 beds for those suffering diseases of the chest.

Some of these were local miners that had served in the many coal mines in the area and who were suffering from Pneumoconiosis.

The year following the opening of the Isolation Hospital, the Clerk presented to the Rural Sanitary Authority a statement showing the apportionment of the expenses for the year which each parish in the Union had to pay for the patients admitted to the hospital from their parish. See chart overleaf.



Apportionment of expenses in relation to the Isolation Hospital			
Year Ended September 1894			
Payments to General Fund			
Parishes of the Union	<i>Amount in</i>		
	<i>£.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d</i>
Chilcote	4	0	0
Croxall	9	10	0
Canwell & Hints	12	6	0
Clifton Campville	18	0	0
Drayton	18	0	0
Edingale	4	17	0
Fazeley	0	12	0
Harlaston	9	7	0
Scyerscote, Statfold & Thorpe	7	0	0
Wigginton	12	0	0
Amington	27	0	0
Austrey	12	0	0
Bolehall	112	0	0
Kingsbury	79	0	0
Middleton	16	0	0
Newton	19	0	0
Seckington	4	0	0
Shuttington	17	0	0
Tamworth Castle	12	0	0
Wilnecote	96	0	0
Total as shown in Tamworth Herald 20/10/1894	591	0	0
Contributions for Patients			
Drayton	50	2	0
Fazeley	8	7	0
Amington	9	14	10
Wilnecote	4	3	6
Total as shown in Tamworth Herald 20/10/1894	663	7	4

At the meeting Mr Hollins expressed his thoughts that it was unfair that each parish should pay for their patients. He believed that patients were sent to the hospital for the good of the whole Union and that the costs should be met by the whole Union.

The arrangement for payment had been made by order of the Local Government Board but he thought that if representation was made to the Board then the arrangement could be altered. Mr MacGregor suggested that the matter should be put before the Joint Hospital Board.

It was explained that the weekly cost of 2/- per inmate compared favourably with other districts. It was agreed that the matter was an important one, the reason for this was that if the

parishes of Hints or Thorpe or Seckington had an outbreak of one or two small-pox cases then the cost would be very heavy for the ratepayers in those parishes to bear. It was thought that the matter was better left with the Isolation Board to apply to the Local Government Board as the Isolation Board had the power to assess the amount on each patient.

Mr Hollins argued that it was the Medical Officer of Health that sent patients to the institution and not the Isolation Board and he would like the Local Government Board to be asked if the cost should be down to each parish or the whole Union.

Mr MacGregor advised that it would be of no use writing to the Local Government Board as it had

Tenders.

TAMWORTH JOINT HOSPITAL BOARD.

THE above Board Invite TENDERS for the Supply and Delivery at the Tamworth Isolation Hospital, of Meat, Bread, Groceries, Milk, Coal and other Goods, for one year from the 1st of April next to 31st March, 1909, inclusive.

Tenders are to be made on a form to be obtained on application to me, and must be delivered (with Samples of Grocery), at the Hospital, marked "Tender," not later than 11 a.m. on Monday, the 2nd March next.

The person tendering for Coal must state the Colliery.

All persons having any Claims or Demands against the above Board up to and including the 31st March, are requested to deliver particulars thereof on or before the 7th April.

Dated this 14th day of February, 1908.

H. J. CHEATLE, Clerk.

Church street, Tamworth. 85

WANTED (immediately), good GENERAL, able to do plain cooking.—Apply, Matron, Isolation Hospital, Tamworth. 507p

WANTED, WARDMAID, age about 21, country preferred.—Apply, Matron, Isolation Hospital, Tamworth. 157p

already been laid down by the Department that each parish should pay its own costs. Mr Hollins still thought that the arrangement could be altered by making a representation, as he had suggested. It was decided to adjourn the matter to the next meeting for consideration..

The advertisement above appeared in the Tamworth Herald on the 15 February 1908. It was a request for tenders for the supply of groceries to the Isolation Hospital

Whilst on the 26 June 1909 the Matron was advertising for a General Help that was able to do plain cooking .

By 12 February 1910 she was in need of a Ward maid.

A new Matron for the Isolation Hospital was appointed in August 1910. A Committee had met to consider the 21 applications that had been received for the post and 4 possible candidates were selected to be interviewed. All 4 attend for the interviews. The successful candidate was Miss Annie Arnold of the joint hospital, Hook, Goole.

TAMWORTH ISOLATION HOSPITAL.

PROPOSED WIRELESS INSTALLATION.

To the Editor of the Herald.

Sir,—It is felt desirable to place a wireless installation in Tamworth Isolation Hospital for the entertainment of the patients, the majority of whom are children, and I beg to appeal to the generosity of the public for their financial assistance. Such an apparatus would enable the patients to pass the hours pleasantly. The Tamworth and District Radio Society have promised to assist in carrying out the object. Subscriptions may be paid to Mr. H. C. Randall, secretary of the Radio Society, Amington road, Bolehall, or to Mr. J. H. Ford, chairman of the Joint Isolation Hospital Board, or to myself.—

(Signed), W. J. ALDRIDGE,
Chairman of the Visiting Committee.
Beverley, Amington road,
Tamworth.

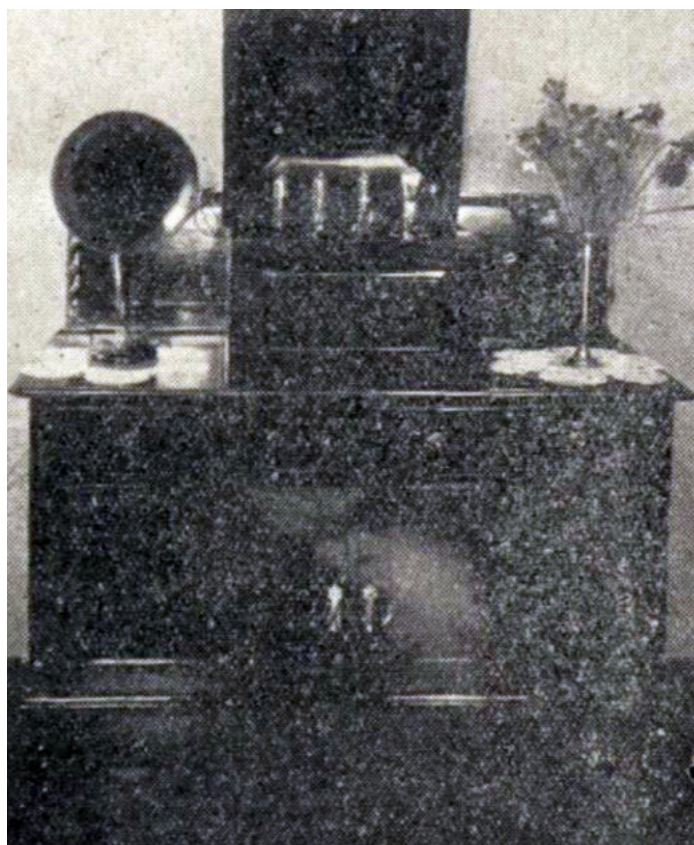
TAMWORTH ISOLATION HOSPITAL WIRELESS FUND.

	£	s.	d.
Brought forward	65	11	8
Collected by Mr. Critchlow	2	16	3½
Wilnecote Central school, per Mr. H. Roberts	15	10	
Wilnecote Junior school, per Miss Farmer	1	3	8½
Wilnecote Infants' school, per Miss Parker	18	1	
Two Gates school, per Miss Matthews	12	8	
Kettlebrook Infants' school, per Miss Matthews	15	2	
	£72	13	5

Christmas 1925 saw an appeal in the Tamworth Herald dated 19 December 1925 for donations from the public to fund a wireless installation for the entertainment of the patients at the hospital. It stated that the majority of patients were children and that the provision of a wireless installation would enable them to pass their time at the hospital pleasantly. Tamworth and District Radio Society had promised to assist with its installation. By March 1926 the fund had reached £72 13s 5d.



The appeal appears to have been a success as the photograph to the above shows the Staff and patients of the Isolation Hospital listening to the radio in 1926. Below is a picture of the receiving set.



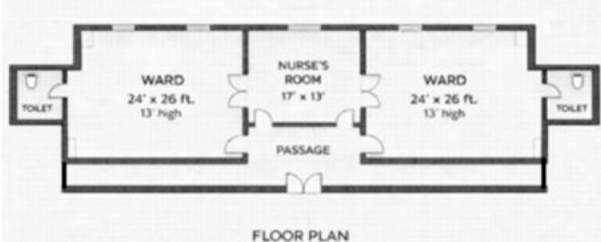
The hospital was closed in the late 1960's early 1970's a report of the sale of the buildings for £40,000, at auction, in 1971 showed that they were to be demolished to make way for residential housing.

TAMWORTH's former chest and isolation hospital at Bolehall has been sold at auction for £40,000. The Victorian building will be demolished and the land used for residential development.



The diagrams and pictures below are *artists impressions* produced using AI based on the information contained in the report of the

opening ceremony in the Tamworth Herald for 11 September 1893. We are reasonably sure they are good representations. But they are not architects plans



Beyond the administrative block

**Present At The Opening Ceremony
Monday 11 September 1893**

Rev. W MacGregor	Chairman
R H Griffin	Mayor of Tamworth
T F Cheatle	Chairman of the Board of Guardians
W Tempest	Alderman
F Alldritt	Alderman
J Hellaby	Alderman
E Hollins	Alderman
S Spruce	Alderman
J Cooper	Alderman
G R Shaw	Member of Joint Hospital Board (Clerk)
H J Clarson	Member of Joint Hospital Board (Surveyor)
R Pearson	Member of Joint Hospital Board (Treasurer)
Mr & Mrs S Fisher	
Mrs Walter Fisher	
Miss Clark	Matron of the Tamworth Cottage Hospital
Mr R Nevill	Ex Mayor of Tamworth
Mr M G Atkins	Town Clerk of Tamworth
Mr H Hare	Alderman
Dr H J Fausset	Medical Officer of the District
Mr J Hellaby	
Mr A Sillito	
Mr W Allton	
Mr J German	
Mr T Johnson	
Mr W Arnold	
Mr C Clarson	
Mr G Hoskison	Councillor
Mr C Dent	Councillor
Mr T Luby	Councillor
Rev A E Hutchinson	
Mr A S Clarson	
Mr J Allen	
Mr J Hastillow	
Mr J Watton	
Mr E Williams	
Mr & Mrs J A Crisp	Contractor with the hospital Superintendent & Matron of the hospital

Apologies Received From

Mr W Evans	Chairman of the Sanitary Committee of Warwickshire County Council
Mr T L Prinsep	
Mr H Paget	



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. This one was seen by the dead more than the living. A bit cryptic so inset is the other side of the door.

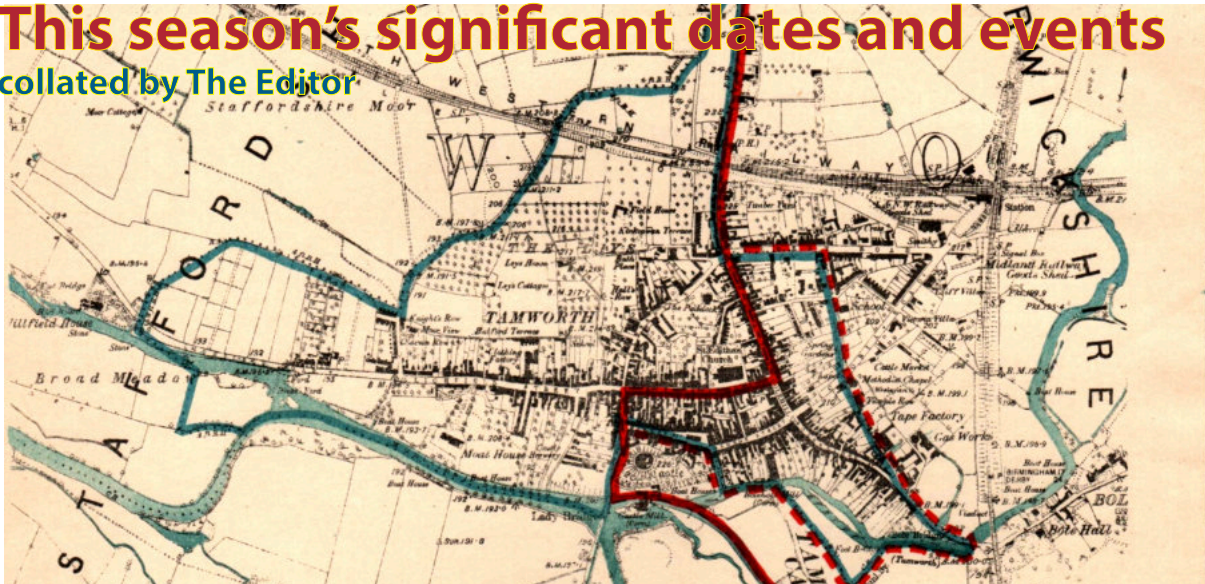


Last Issues Doorway:
East Door to St Editha's Church

Photo © Jamedia

This season's significant dates and events

collated by The Editor



1 April 1889 - Tamworth now placed in Staffordshire. The Warwickshire boundary was moved east. The border had run from the river up the the Holloway to Silver Street.

1968 - Councillor Lily Tricklebank became the second woman to serve as Tamworth's Mayor

1840 - Charles Dickens comes to Tamworth, to visit his brother Alfred who worked as a railway worker in Tamworth

29 April 1933 The original letter was published in the Herald to start the current Tamworth FC to compete in senior circles of the game.

2 May 1882 - Baxterley Colliery explosion, 8 men and 1 boy entombed, 23 men died in the rescue.

20 May 796 - Coenwulf became King of Mercia on the death of Ecgfrith.

20 May 2018 - Aethelflaed's statue is delivered to Tamworth, the work of artist and sculptor Luke Perry.

22 May 1899 - Tamworth Castle formally opened to the public by the Earl of Dartmouth.



23 May 1345 - Most of the church and the town centre is destroyed in the Great Fire.

22 May 1932 - Tamworth's Great Flood and parts of Bolebridge Street are under 8 feet of water.

24 May 1996 - Sir Robert Peel Hospital opened by Lady Lightbown

26 May 1963 - Twycross Zoo opens, previously the collection had been at Hints. Does anyone know where this was? Any Photos?

27 May 1811 - Census records population of the town as 2,991 and of the parish 5,994.

8 June 1973 Margaret Thatcher opens the new Tamworth Central Library

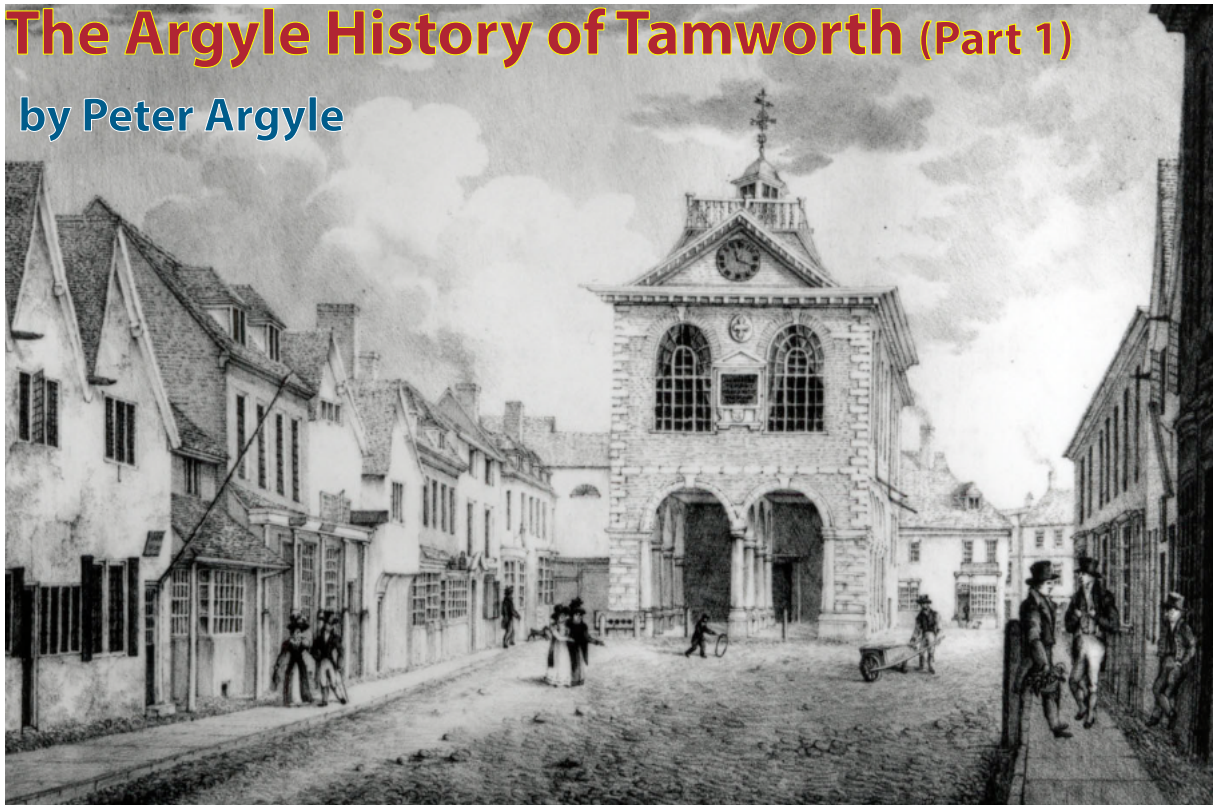
12 June - death of Aethelflaed

23 June 1959 - The Old Bell Inn called time for the last time.



The Argyle History of Tamworth (Part 1)

by Peter Argyle



This Argyle History of Tamworth is the first chapter of Peter Argyle's book *Victorian Tamworth: The life of Thomas Argyle*. It sets the scene by covering Tamworth from the mists of time to Thomas literally getting off the bus [stage coach] in Tamworth in 1834.

The review of the [book is here](#). When the Editor looked at the book he noticed that the first chapter of 50 pages was a very good history of Tamworth that could be a stand alone book in its own right. Hence serialising it in the Magazine with the kind permission of the author, Peter Argyle. So read on and when you get to the end of the serialisation of the first chapter in a couple issues time go and buy the book to read the rest: *Editor*.

The Prologue

A few years ago I, Peter Argyle, came into possession of a large, framed photograph of my great-great grandfather Thomas Argyle who came to Tamworth from his native Derbyshire to work as a clerk in the office of Francis Willington, a solicitor long established in the borough and the third generation of his family in the profession. I wondered about Thomas Argyle and decided to look into his story.

The result was published early in 2025. [Victorian](#)

[Tamworth, The Life of Thomas Argyle](#) describes his life and some of the events - civic, social and political - in the borough during his time there, from 1834 to 1898

Let us imagine the Derby coach pulling up, with much shouting and bustle, outside the Castle Inn on that June day of 1834. Some passengers doubtless called for rooms, with Miss Urram Lucas and her servants hurrying to provide accommodation and refreshment. Others who had reached journey's end perhaps found family or friends awaiting them. As he climbed down from the coach, Thomas Argyle was very much a stranger; no family or friends were there to greet him.





It is possible that Francis Willington himself, or maybe someone from his office, was at the inn to act as guide, or perhaps young Thomas Argyle had to make his own way to Willington's house and office in Church Street. It was a day which marked a considerable change in Thomas' life and one which began his long and successful career in the town he came to love.

To understand the wider context, I delved into the earlier history of Tamworth and my research forms the basis of this short series of articles for the Tamworth Heritage Magazine.

1. Tamworth – the passage of time; Tamworoig to Tamworth

King William IV had been on the throne for four years when, on Monday, 30 June 1834 a young man arrived in Tamworth perched on an outside seat of a stagecoach, one of a number of passengers who either had not secured or could not afford a seat inside the vehicle. He had travelled from Derby, a journey of some forty-five miles which would have taken around seven or eight hours, involving halts to change horses every ten or fifteen miles.

It is not known which route he took from Derby, whether by Repton and Burton-on-Trent and then to Tamworth by the turnpike road through Elford, or by way of Ashby-de-la-Zouch. Years later he was to say he had been driven into the town from the north, along the Ashby road and down Stoney Lane, as this approach was then called.

It is easy to picture him looking around with interest - and perhaps trepidation - as the coach reached the first houses in Gungate, one of the ancient streets of the borough, once known as Grumpigate, leading to the heart of Tamworth.

It is not known where the stagecoach halted, although the principal coaching inns in the period were the Castle Inn and the Tamworth Arms Inn.

Happily, there is an almost contemporary lithograph print, dating from 1829, one of a series of images of Tamworth by Etienne Hamel (1796-1865), which shows this northern approach to the town. (see above) The rough, uneven road passes between high banks, the first houses of Gungate appearing in the middle distance, with a skyline dominated by the tower of the parish church of St Editha and the castle.

Palmer¹ in his History of Tamworth written just a few years later, says of Stoney Lane: 'the appropriateness of the name was indisputable, when the road was proverbially very dirty, irregular, and narrow; and this part of the street consisted of a very few poor scattered and thatched cottages.' In later years the name was changed to Upper Gungate and as such became a respectable and desirable place to live.

The young man driven into Tamworth on that summer day was my great-great-grandfather

¹ The History of the Town and Castle of Tamworth, in the Counties of Stafford and Warwick; Charles Ferrers Palmer: 1845

Thomas Argyle. He had secured employment as a clerk in the office of Francis Willington (1800-81), a solicitor in the town, principal in a long-established legal practice formed in 1749 by his grandfather John Willington (1727-1801). The business had then been passed to Francis' father, Thomas Willington (1764-1834), who practised as an attorney in the town for fifty-four years, as well as serving as the Town Clerk and holding the posts of Clerk to the Trustees of the Tamworth Turnpike Roads and Steward to the Hundred Court. Thomas Willington had died on 26 March 1834, just three months before Thomas Argyle's arrival in the borough; as a result, Francis Willington had become the principal in the firm and had also succeeded his father to the important position of Town Clerk.

In 1834 Tamworth was a small, self-contained market town and borough, lying some fourteen miles northeast of Birmingham in the valley of the River Tame, at the point where the river joins the River Anker. When Thomas Argyle arrived the town was divided between Warwickshire and Staffordshire, a situation which continued until boundary changes introduced in 1889 saw the borough become entirely part of Staffordshire. Indeed, as Thomas Argyle's stagecoach carried him along Gungate, he would probably have been unaware the left-hand side of the street was in Warwickshire, the right in Staffordshire.

At the time the Romans arrived in the mid-first century, the river valley of the Tame was occupied by the Coritani, a Celtic tribe which lived across much of the Midlands, their territory extending to the North Sea coast of Lincolnshire. There are few indications of Roman occupation around Tamworth.

Fragments of Roman building materials have been found near Bolebridge Street and a lead ingot from the time of Vespasian, dated to about 76AD, was found at Hints; it is currently in the Tamworth Castle Museum.

Excavations undertaken in April 2017 in connection with a planning application at Windmill Farm in the northwest of the town, uncovered traces of a Romano-British farmstead, occupied during the second and third centuries. Clearly there were people living in the area during those centuries, but there is no evidence of major settlement; it is therefore safe to assert Tamworth is not of Roman origin.

The Watling Street, the important Roman road from London to Wroxeter, passes only a few miles from where the town would grow. A smaller and probably more ancient route, running parallel to what is now Upper Gungate, crossed the Tame at a long-established ford, generally accepted to have been where the Lady Bridge now stands, to intersect with the Watling Street.

After the Romans withdrew at the start of the fifth century, the area was settled by Saxons. Exactly when this occurred is hard to state but it is worth noting the name of the village of Hints, some four miles from Tamworth, is derived from the Welsh word Hynt, meaning a road; an obvious reference to the Watling Street.

It is suggested the area was occupied by Welsh speakers until at least the sixth century². 'Tamworoig' – 'an open meadow by the Tame' – must have been an attractive place for the invaders; there was good land for farming, plenty of timber in the great forest of Arden and rivers which not only provided access (and fish) but also made the place defensible. The ancient Forest of Arden covered much of the West Midlands and was bounded by the Watling Street, Icknield Street, running from Gloucestershire to South Yorkshire and the Fosse Way, from Exeter to Lincoln; no Roman roads were built through the forest.

A fortified manor, surrounded by a palisade wall and called 'Tomtun' or 'Tame-town' was established beside the Anker and thrived. As its fortifications and population expanded it became, by the late sixth century, one of the most important settlements in the Kingdom of Mercia, the largest of the various kingdoms dividing what is now England. The first king of Mercia known from the records is Creoda, who reigned from 584 and built a fortification at Tamworth, thus beginning its long connection with Mercian kings and giving the town the royal status it was to maintain for some three hundred years.

King Penda, who ruled from around 630 to 655, increased the power and prestige of his kingdom by defeating two of the kings of Northumbria who had claimed overlordship of Mercia but was himself killed at the Battle of Winwaed in 655, fighting against the new Northumbrian king, Oswiu (c612-670); most of northern Mercia fell under Northumbrian control in consequence.

² Signposts to the Past; Margaret Gelling; 1978

Penda's son Peada succeeded him in the south of the kingdom. He had converted to Christianity at Repton two years earlier; as the influence of the new religion spread, the Diocese of Mercia was established in 656, with its first Bishop based at Repton.

Chad, who became the fifth bishop from 669 until his death from plague on 2 March 672, moved the bishopric to Lichfield, with the diocese taking that name from 691. Chad came from a significant Northumbrian family and was educated at Lindisfarne and in Ireland before becoming the Abbot of Lastingham, in Yorkshire. He was for a time the Bishop of Northumbria but in 669 was removed from the see by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Theodore of Tarsus (602-690), shortly after which he was appointed to Mercia. He was canonised after his death.

Paeda's reign was brief as he was killed by his wife Ealhflæd at Easter 656, only months after taking the throne; she was a daughter of Oswiu of Northumbria. For a number of troubled years thereafter Northumbrian influence and control grew until the yoke was finally removed by King Æthelred, a brother of King Penda, who reigned between 675 and 704 and defeated Ecgfrith of Northumbria, Oswiu's son, at the Battle of Trent in 679, allowing the Mercians to gain control over Lindsey, a lesser Anglo-Saxon kingdom based on Lincoln, which had been absorbed into Northumbria in the seventh century.

Ethelbald became king of the Mercians in 716 and during his reign of forty years did much to strengthen Mercia. Bede (c672-735) the Anglo-Saxon monk, author and theologian known as the 'Father of English History', records that by about 730 Ethelbald was ruling all of England south of the Humber, dominating the kingdoms of Wessex and Kent. However, in 757 he was defeated by a West Saxon force at Seckington, four miles northeast of Tamworth and almost immediately afterwards was killed by members of his own bodyguard, for reasons now long forgotten.

He was buried in a crypt at St Wystan's church in Repton and was succeeded by Beornred, of whom almost nothing is known except that in the same year he was forced to flee by Offa, a fairly distant cousin of Ethelbald. Contemporary accounts suggest Beornred was deposed through a popular uprising against him but whatever the truth of this, Offa took the throne in 757 and ruled for thirty-nine years, until his death 796.

Offa was without doubt the greatest of the Mercian kings and during his reign Tamworth's status grew. A successful warlord and astute ruler, Offa not only dominated Kent and Sussex to the south but also became overlord of East Anglia in the 780s. To further extend his influence across southern England, he formed an alliance, strengthened through marriage, with Wessex.

He is of course also credited with building Offa's Dyke, marking the border between Mercia and Wales. Under Offa, Tamworth became the capital of Mercia - or perhaps more accurately, one of the royal towns most favoured by the king. In Saxon times kings tended to move from place to place rather than having a fixed 'capital', since maintaining a single centre of power would have been too demanding for localities to supply foodstuffs and other essentials; peripatetic kings would ensure the burden was shared.

During Offa's reign Repton remained important, as did Lichfield as an ecclesiastical centre, while the other places where he constructed fortified and easily defended settlements - burhs - including Bedford, Hereford, Northampton and Oxford, were significant. It is known Offa built what has been described as a palace in Tamworth and although few details survive, there can be no doubt it was an impressive complex, said to have been 'the wonder of the age.'¹

It may have been located between the present Town Hall and Bolebridge Street and while excavations in Bolebridge Street in 1968 revealed the outline of a large Saxon building, it could not be definitively shown to have been Offa's palace. Another school of thought suggests the palace could have been built closer to the church, with the church - or its predecessors - forming part of a complex of buildings. In either case, Offa's palace would probably have grown from the buildings of earlier Saxon kings.

Offa also enclosed the town with fortified walls and a ditch, later known as the 'King's Ditch', traces of which could still be seen towards the end of the nineteenth century. It ran from the River Tame near the present Lady Bridge, along the line of Silver Street, to the east of Orchard Street and then followed a line roughly along Hospital Street, Albert Road and Bolebridge Street to the River Anker.

¹ Sir Francis Palgrave: History of the Anglo-Saxons; 1831

Archaeological excavations have revealed the remains of two water mills on the river, one of which was dated to the 9th century, thought to be one of the earliest mills from the post-Roman period in England, while the other was shown to have been destroyed by fire. There was a long tradition of watermills on both the Tame and the Anker. Various charters survive which were sealed in Tamworth between 751 and 857, again reflecting the importance of the town in the governance of Mercia.

Offa died on 29 July 796 and was succeeded by his son, Ecgfrith who remained king for only five months before Ceonwulf succeeded and reigned until 821, after which Mercia began to decline as the strength of Wessex steadily grew under its King Egbert, reigning from 802 until his death in 839. After defeating the Mercians at the Battle of Ellandun in 825, Egbert of Wessex usurped Mercia's dominant place across the southeast of the country. In 829 he defeated Wiglaf of Mercia and for a period ruled Mercia, as well as receiving the submission of Northumbria.

Nevertheless, Tamworth maintained its position as a favoured residence of Mercian kings through these troubled years but from the end of the eighth century a new threat arose. The Vikings were first recorded raiding the English coast in 789 and their incursions continued during Offa's reign, mostly in northern England until 835 when the Vikings launched their first major raid on the south of the country, on the Isle of Sheppey.

After relatively few years of sailing back to Scandinavia with such treasure, goods and slaves they could seize, the Vikings began to do more than raid coastal towns and villages or those they could reach by river. Increasingly, as the ninth century progressed, they began to settle and defend the land seized from the Saxons. In 866 the important city of York fell to Danish Vikings and during the early years of the reign of Alfred the Great, from 871, the Vikings captured most of northern England, advanced into Mercia and came close to ending Saxon dominance across the whole country.

The story of Alfred's recovery from the nadir of his fortunes, hiding as a fugitive in the marshes of Somerset before his stunning victory over the Danes at Battle of Edington in 878, is beyond the scope of this brief summary.

Tamworth was besieged in 873 by the Great Heathen Army, a formidable Danish host led by the brothers Ubbe and Ivar Ragnarsson, known as Ivar the Boneless for reasons now forgotten.

This formidable force had subjugated both Northumbria and East Anglia before it was turned on Mercia, reaching Nottingham by 867. King Burgred of Mercia, who had been on the throne since 852, attempted to buy off the Danes by paying danegeld but this only delayed the inevitable.

After overwintering in London, in 872 the Viking army went north to York before marching into northern Mercia. Tamworth was attacked. Burgred defended the burh but the following year the Danes finally took and comprehensively sacked it, leaving Tamworth abandoned and in ruins. Burgred was subsequently forced into exile and died in Rome fourteen years later. Tamworth remained deserted until 913 when Æthelflæd, eldest daughter of Alfred the Great and Lady of the Mercians, rebuilt the town and its defences. She also constructed - or rebuilt - a strong fortification at the confluence of the rivers Tame and Anker; thereafter Tamworth became her principal residence.

Æthelflæd was born in about 870 and during her childhood much of what is now England was dominated by the Danes. However, after Alfred's successes, the western parts of Mercia came under the rule of Æthelred, the Ealdorman or Lord of Mercia from 879, while eastern Mercia remained within the Danelaw, that part of England under Danish rule, running north of a line roughly from London to the Wirral.

Little is known of Æthelred's early life or how he was related to his predecessors but by 883 he had accepted Alfred as his overlord, a significant step on the road towards the end of Mercian independence. Alfred strengthened his position with regard to Mercia by marrying his eldest daughter Æthelflæd to Æthelred in about 886, when she was sixteen.

While Æthelred successfully fought off further Danish incursions, it is generally accepted that by the beginning of the tenth century his health was in serious decline and Æthelflæd had taken over much of the government of Saxon Mercia. After Æthelred died in 911, Æthelflæd became Myrcna hlaedige, the Lady of the Mercians, the only time in Anglo-Saxon history when a woman ruled a kingdom.

Alfred died in 899 and was succeeded by his son Edward who worked closely with his sister, the Lady of the Mercians to extend the number of the fortified burghs which had been such a significant factor in Alfred's success over the Danes, a network within which Tamworth was an important feature.

In 917 Æthelflæd sent an army to capture Derby from the Danes and the following year Leicester surrendered to her forces. The Danes in York were on the point of offering her their loyalty when she died in Tamworth, on 12 June 918, leaving the matter unresolved. After Æthelflæd's death her body was taken to Gloucester where she was buried alongside her husband in the east chapel of the church they had founded there, close to the tomb of St Oswald.

Æthelflæd was succeeded by her daughter Ælfwynn but in December of that same year Edward deposed her, sent her to Wessex and successfully took complete control of Mercia after some contention with the Mercians. What happened to Ælfwynn thereafter is not known; it is thought she took holy orders as a nun.¹

King Edward died in 924 in Cheshire, leaving the throne to his son Æthelstan (924-939) who was crowned at Kingston Upon Thames in September of the following year. He had probably spent some of his childhood at Tamworth with his aunt, Æthelflæd and he continued to maintain Tamworth as one of his royal residences.

Æthelstan's great rival was Sigtrygg, the Hiberno-Scandinavian king of Northumbria. In January 926, confident that diplomacy would be more effective than war, Æthelstan arranged a marriage between his sister and Sigtrygg; as part of the settlement, Sigtrygg agreed to convert to Christianity.

After he was baptised, the marriage ceremony took place at Tamworth, conducted by Ælfwine, the Bishop of Lichfield.

There is much debate over the identity of this sister of Æthelstan, with some claiming she was Editha, later to become Prioress of Polesworth. However, the closest contemporary account of the marriage, found in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, does not record her name at all.

¹ Ifwynn, second lady of the Mercians; Maggie Bailey; 2001

In the 12th century the historian William of Malmesbury could not confirm her identity beyond stating she was a full sister to Æthelstan, while an account written at the monastery of Bury St Edmunds in the twelfth century and repeated by two thirteenth century writers, claims the marriage was never consummated and after Sigtrygg's death his widow returned to Mercia where she founded a nunnery at Polesworth, thus connecting her with St Editha.

This remains a matter of some debate which does not need to be developed here; however, these events do reinforce the importance of Tamworth during the period.

The following year Sigtrygg died and Æthelstan invaded Northumbria. Despite an attempt by Guthfrith, Sigtrygg's cousin, who brought an army from Dublin to confront Æthelstan, York was captured and all the northern Danelaw came under Anglo-Saxon rule - if uneasily.

During Æthelstan's reign a mint was established at Tamworth. A number of silver coins minted in the town have been found in Scandinavia, having probably been used to pay danegeld to invading Vikings. It is said that the first 'penny' was struck in Tamworth; certainly the first silver pennies were struck during Offa's reign, perhaps not in Tamworth however.

This time of relative peace and prosperity ended after the death of Æthelstan in 939. The Danes of Northumbria chose Olaf Guthfrithson, King of Dublin as their king and Anglo-Saxon control of the north failed completely.

Olaf and Edmund, who had succeeded Æthelstan in 939, agreed to divide England between them but their treaty did not last; after Olaf died two years later, his cousin and successor to Northumbria, Olaf Cuaran, invaded Mercia and in either 942 or 943, took Tamworth by storm; the town was plundered and then burned by the Danes who, the chronicles report, 'took away much booty with them', although there were heavy casualties on both sides. Tamworth was rebuilt but never regained its important status as a royal centre.

2. 1066 and all that; Church and Saint

The story of St Editha's Church in many ways reflects the history of the town itself and can also be traced back to the Saxon period. It would be reasonable to assert there was a church, probably on the same site, as far back as the seventh century but no traces remain.

The Mercian kings, after their conversion to Christianity in the mid-seventh century, would undoubtedly have had a church in what was their most important centre, but any church built in those times would have been destroyed in the Viking raids which reduced Tamworth to ruins.

As we have seen, King Æthelstan's sister was married to Sigtrygg of Northumbria in Tamworth in 926, which more than suggests the existence of a church in the royal burgh at that time, although it would inevitably have been a primary target for the pagan Vikings in 943.

It is believed the existing church was founded during the reign of King Edgar (959-975) although there has been considerable debate over whether any of that building survives. It is more certain that a Norman church was built during the time of the Marmions, although the dedication to St Editha shows her cult was well-established in the town by Norman times, which again gives support to the suggestion of earlier Saxon church or churches.

Archaeological and other evidence indicates the Norman church was the same size, except for the tower, as the earlier Saxon edifice. When Henry II visited Tamworth Castle, with a party which included the Archbishop of Canterbury, the church was almost complete.

St Editha's church was restored from a shell after the great fire which swept the town in 1345. The task rested on the shoulders of Baldwin de Witney (c1290-1369) Dean of the College of Tamworth from 1329-69, and whose tomb still survives within the church. He was also a Canon of Lichfield Cathedral for the last few years of his life.

The work included construction of the tower, which was originally intended to have a spire, however these plans were changed and the four pinnacles substituted, probably due to the tower's foundations shifting as it was being built, making a spire structurally impossible.

One of the pinnacles was blown down in a storm in December 1833. The tower is notable for its double spiral staircase, with separate entrances inside and outside the church. This feature of the tower has caused some difficulties over the years as it made the tower less stable, leading to strengthening work being necessary, for example in 1849 and again in the twentieth century. There are just two churches in England with this feature; the other is All Saints, Pontefract, dating from the 1280s. [See the Magazine article on this and the third twin spiral Staircase in England [click here Editor](#)]

St Editha's was caught up in the great changes to Church governance during the reign of Henry VIII, when not only were some of the church's greatest treasures removed but also the College of Tamworth Church - consisting of the Dean and Prebendaries - was brought to an end.

The existence of the body is remembered in the name College Lane, between Church Street and George Street. In the years since then the church has changed, reflecting the ecclesiastical and cultural tastes of the centuries that have followed.

Almost all of these innovations were paid for through private donation or public subscription and in this context it is interesting to note that in September 1809 the Tamworth Music Festival took place, the proceeds of which were 'designed for improving the Church, and rendering Part of it free for the Accommodation of the Poor.' The highlights were to be a morning performance in the church on 21 September of the Messiah, with a 'Grand Miscellaneous Concert' at the Theatre in the evening - the theatre stood at the junction of Church Street and Gungate - followed by a ball in the Town Hall.

On the following day there was to be a performance of 'the Oratorio of the Creation, compressed into two parts, and a Selection from the Works of Handel', followed in the evening by a 'very Grand selection of Sacred Music' in the church, with the principal performers Mrs. Vaughan, Miss Hawkins, the wonderfully named Master Buggins and Miss Melville, supported by a large chorus 'engaged from the Chapel Royal, Lichfield Choir, Lancashire, Birmingham and other Choral Societies' and an orchestra of one hundred and thirty musicians. The festival only appears to have taken place in that year.

Before leaving the church, we will glance at the story of St Editha herself. As already noted, her descent is uncertain, with much debate over whether she was a daughter of Egbert, King of Wessex from 802 to 839, or Æthelstan's sister who married in Tamworth.

Her burial place was said in one early source to have been at Polesworth. However, other accounts deny any connection between this Royal princess and the Saint. It is said there was a shrine dedicated to St Editha at Polesworth during the seventh century and that she founded a small cell in the Forest of Arden, later to become Polesworth Abbey.

Some records suggest she may have come from Ireland, while other writers claim St Editha originally founded her nunnery in Tamworth before it moved to Polesworth. Yet other sources suggest Polesworth was founded by St Modwena and that St Editha was the first abbess. These conflicting accounts have not been and are unlikely ever to be resolved.

There is one well-known local legend of St Editha, recounted by Palmer, which should be included here; it tells how the nunnery in Tamworth was forced to move to Polesworth by the Marmions who wanted to take possession of the nuns' property. Years later, as soon as he had settled in Tamworth, Robert de Marmion expelled the nuns from Polesworth. Shortly afterwards, following a 'very costly entertainment' at the castle, possibly after a day spent hunting in Hopwas woods, while Marmion was 'reclining on his bed, St. Editha, habited as a veiled nun, and bearing a crozier in her hand, appeared to him in a vision.

She upbraided him for his sacrilegious disposition, and announced to him that, unless the abbey of Polesworth were restored to her successors, he should eventually suffer an evil death, and go to hell. In order to make him more sensible of her admonition, she smote him in the side with the point of her pastoral staff; and then vanished. Being aroused by the blow, he cried out so loudly that his friends in the house heard him, and immediately hurried to his chamber, to learn what had occurred.

They found him extremely tormented with the pain of his wound, and the bed covered with blood'.

After he had told them what had happened 'they advised him to confess himself, and to make a solemn vow that he would restore the nuns, and make full compensation to them.' Once Robert Marmion did this 'the pain ceased, and he recovered.' Palmer discounts the supernatural part of the story but accepts there is a 'fundamental truth' behind the legend, although in his view the restoration occurred during the reign of Henry I.

There can be no doubt that Saxon England was in many ways a successful and highly cultured country, but it cannot be said to have been peaceful. The former Saxon kingdoms were united by Athelstan (c894-939) who reigned as king of the Anglo-Saxons from 924 and as king of the English from 927 until his death in 939. However, after his death the new kingdom became increasingly unstable, both through internal strife and, from 991, by a resumption of Viking raids which ultimately resulted in England being ruled by Cnut (c990-1035), crowned king in 1016.

He became King of Denmark two years later and King of Norway in 1028. Cnut divided the country in earldoms, most of which were led by his Danish followers; Wessex however had a Saxon earl, Godwin, the father of Harold.

Cnut was succeeded by his son Harthacnut and then by Edward the Confessor, whose life and reign led inexorably to the Norman invasion of 1066. Tamworth played little part in these events.

The new shires of Staffordshire and Warwickshire were established in the tenth century, the shire system having originated in Wessex where the shires were governed by an ealdorman and later by the 'shire reeve' or sheriff.

The shires were divided into smaller administrative units, usually but not always called hundreds; the etymology of the word is obscure.

The county boundary between Staffordshire and Warwickshire ran through Tamworth, along Gungate, Church Street and Holloway, with the Saxon fortification - later the castle - lying on the Warwickshire side and the parish church in Staffordshire.

It is thought this unusual arrangement was devised so that the town would fall within two separate hundreds, those of Offlow and of

Helmingford, which would enable sufficient men to be found to defend the town, by sharing the burden between the inhabitants of the two hundreds.

Following the conquest of England by William of Normandy, Tamworth was granted to his steward, Robert Despencer, who in the 1080's built a large motte and bailey, partly on the site of the Saxon fortification. Robert Despencer came from Normandy where his family had been tenants of the lords of Tancarville; the surname is derived from the office they held of dispenser or steward.

The Domesday Book shows he had broad estates in Gloucestershire, Lincolnshire and Oxfordshire as well as Warwickshire - where Tamworth was then in part located- but Tamworth itself is one of the relatively few places not recorded in the Domesday Book.

It is possible William the Conqueror visited Tamworth; he is known to have been in Stafford twice on his way to the north; breaking his journey at Tamworth, held by Despencer, would have been an option. Robert died in or about 1098 without a direct male heir, whereupon his estates passed to his brother Urse, one of whose daughters married Robert de Marmion, of an important Anglo-Norman family, who was granted the feudal barony of Tamworth between 1110 and 1114.

A sandstone castle, consisting of a keep and a bailey within fortified outer walls, was built to replace its timber predecessor during the time the Marmions held Tamworth. The outer parts have gone but although altered in following centuries, the essential twelfth century structure of the keep remains. Robert de Marmion died in 1144.

War came to Tamworth again during the conflict between the Empress Matilda, daughter of Henry I, and King Stephen, which began after Matilda invaded England in 1139 in an attempt to take the crown she claimed as rightfully her own. Although she had been designated heir to the throne by her father, Stephen had been crowned in 1135 very soon after Henry's death.

Early possession of the crown and treasury strengthened his position and by any measure, persuading the great nobles of England to accept a queen regnant was always going to be difficult.

The civil war which followed led to a complete breakdown in law and order across the country and to deep divisions among the landholding nobility.

Robert de Marmion joined those forces loyal to King Stephen, which led to Tamworth Castle being taken by Matilda's troops; it remained in their occupation until an uneasy peace was reached by the Treaty of Wallingford in 1153. After Stephen's death at Dover on 25 October the following year and the coronation of Henry II on 19 December at Westminster, Tamworth was restored to the Marmions.

The family held the manor until the death of the last baron without an heir in 1291. During the Marmion period the castle was visited by Henry I in 1115 and by Henry II; the date of the latter's visit is uncertain but must have occurred between 1154 when he was crowned and 1161, as an undated charter he signed in Tamworth was witnessed by Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury who died in April 1161, to be succeeded as archbishop by Thomas Becket. Becket was Henry's Chancellor from 1155 to 1162 and would almost certainly have accompanied the king to Tamworth.

Robert de Marmion, the fourth of the line, joined the rebels led by Robert Fitzwalter against King John in the First Barons' War between 1215 and 1217; in response that uncertain monarch ordered all de Marmion's lands to be confiscated and Tamworth castle to be demolished. Fortunately, for Tamworth if not for the king, John contracted dysentery in the autumn of 1216 and died at Newark on Trent on 19 October before his orders could be carried out.

During the reign of Edward II, who visited in 1325, Tamworth secured its first Royal charter, dated 1317 and granting the town considerable privileges, while a second charter of 1337, by his son Edward III, gave the town the right to hold two annual fairs, something of great advantage since such events attracted merchants and trade from a wide area. Edward III came to Tamworth in 1330, the third year of his long reign and stayed in the castle while hunting on Cannock Chase.

However, the rising prosperity of the town was brought to a dramatic halt when a disastrous fire on Trinity Monday, 23 May 1345 destroyed much of the town, then built mostly of wood and thatch. St Editha's church, although built of

stone, was reduced to a shell. Three years later Tamworth was visited by the Black Death as it swept through England; the population of the town was mercilessly reduced, possibly by a third. Tamworth recovered from both of these disasters.

The town played a brief part in the Wars of the Roses; Henry Tudor's army, marching to face Richard III, left Lichfield for Tamworth on 19 August 1485. Tudor remained behind in the city with a small bodyguard of about twenty men, before eventually following his forces towards Tamworth. In 1485 the road between Lichfield and Tamworth divided near Whittington, one route heading through the village to a crossing of the Tame at Elford, about five miles from Lichfield, where it joined the old road from Burton to Tamworth.

The other way took the direct route through Hopwas and thence by a bridge over the Tame to Tamworth. It is said Henry Tudor missed his way by accident, but this seems unlikely. Although his army was a small one, perhaps five or six thousand men at that stage of the campaign, it would have left clear signs of its passage, impossible to mistake. Therefore, it is more probable Tudor's 'accident' was in fact deliberate; he left the security of his army to travel through a potentially hostile country with only a small bodyguard - if even that - for a definite purpose.

Tudor's mother, Margaret Beaufort who had married Thomas, Lord Stanley as her fourth husband, owned Elford in her own right. It would be reasonable to suggest Tudor went to meet her to confer about her husband's intentions and certainly, when he arrived in Tamworth the next day, to the great relief of his troops, Tudor claimed he had acted deliberately in order 'to receive some good news of certain of his secret friends', a suggestion which would have appeared entirely plausible.

Further, on the same day he rode on to Atherstone to confer with Thomas and William Stanley; the Stanleys were later to play a decisive - and in the view of this author, an utterly treacherous - part in the Battle of Bosworth on 22 August.

During the Tudor period Tamworth was granted a charter by Elizabeth I in 1560, confirming the town's existing rights and privileges, establishing the town as a unified borough with

a single municipal corporation. A further charter of 1588 strengthened the town's rights of self-government by formally constituting the Corporation with its Bailiffs and twenty four Capital Burgesses, together with the right to elect a Town Clerk, as well as the Poor Law Guardians, responsible for the relief of the poor and the Governors of the Grammar School, an arrangement continuing for almost two hundred and fifty years, until such forms of governance were swept away by the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835.

The influence behind this second charter was Sir Edward Devereux (c1544-c1622), a grandson of Walter Devereux, 1st Viscount Hereford. He was MP for Tamworth from 1588 to 1589 and Sheriff of Warwickshire from 1593 to 1594 and was the great-uncle of Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, the Queen's favourite during the 1590s.

Among very extensive landholdings, the family owned the Drayton estate, a few miles from Tamworth and were influential in the area; Elizabeth appointed Robert Devereux High Steward of the borough in 1588. Through Robert Devereux the family enjoyed easy access to the Queen - for a time; he was executed in the Tower of London on 25 February 1601. During this period Tamworth was affected by the bubonic plague; there were several outbreaks of this terrible disease between 1563 and 1626.

James I visited Tamworth on three occasions; for the first, on 18 August 1619, he stayed in the castle with Sir Humphrey Ferrers while his son Prince Charles stayed with William Comberford at the Moat House, on the edge of the town. James also visited on 21 August 1621 and 19 August 1624 but on both occasions without the prince.

When the Civil War broke out in 1642.....

We ran out of space. So brace yourselves for Part 2 in the next issue! EDITOR.

*Remember this is Chapter one of the first of three books on **Victorian Tamworth**. We have the review of the second volume on the following page and the full review of the first one you have been reading [on this link](#)*

Book Review

Victorian Tamworth: The Next Generation

Peter Argyle

Published: Peter Argyle Publishing

www.peterargyle.com

ISBN 978-0-0369-1202-4

Softcover 562 pages

15.2cm by 22.8cm

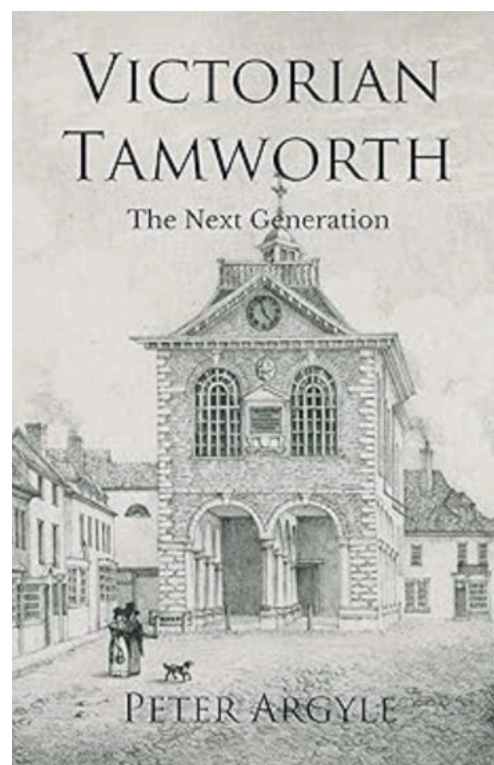
This is the second volume, the first being [The Life of Thomas Argyle that we reviewed previously](#). However if you just see this volume without knowing about the first it might be a confusing title.

This volume continues on with Thomas Argyle's two sons who were also leading solicitors in Tamworth and another son who developed the midlands Railways from Derby. It's not all sons as should become clear in the third volume.

This is a weighty book being over 540 pages, and a few pictures, though a lot more than the first volume. The problem is photography didn't actually become easily usable until the 2nd half of the 19th century and most pictures were formal poses. However the author is a trained journalist with a lot of experience. Therefore this is not only well researched but written in a readable style rather than that of an academic treatise. The lack of pictures is not really a problem as the text does paint the scene well and in an engaging way.

As the author said that as he researched his family history it turned out to be a *history of Victorian Tamworth* because as a family of solicitors who were also involved in the town council, and many societies in the town, they touched many parts of life in Tamworth and interacted with people at all levels. Though, some of the people in this volume extend into the early 1900s past what is strictly Victorian Tamworth.

This book, like the previous one, follows the Holloway Society motto [Persequimur allecibus rubrum in cavernis leporis](#) and leads you into all sorts of interesting places and corners of Tamworth history and its people.



Whilst the Argyle name is familiar to many, because it crops up here and there, in the newspapers as "the Solicitor" in a court case or sale of property or in a Council report, or a Charity announcement or a in some society documents, it is not a name that rings like Peel, like Athelstan or his aunt but as you delve into the history the name underpins a vast amount of 1800s Tamworth.

The one complaint I do have is there is no index. It does take a lot of skill and effort not to mention a lot of time to make a good index after the book is written, and the author is exhausted.

That said the contents pages does sub divide the chapters in to up to 15 sub sections which should suffice for most people. Otherwise it is back to sticky tags and a pencil!

I suspect these three books, when the next one gets here, will be essential for anyone interested in anything in Tamworth from the 1830s to the 1930s. It was a busy century with a lot happening! Oh yes, and of course, anyone interested in the Argyle family too!

Book Review

Along the Borders. In search of what divides and unites the British Isles

Published: [Doubleday, 2026](#)

ISBN 978-1-5299-3588-2

Hardback 363 pages

14.6cm by 22.4cm

RRP £17

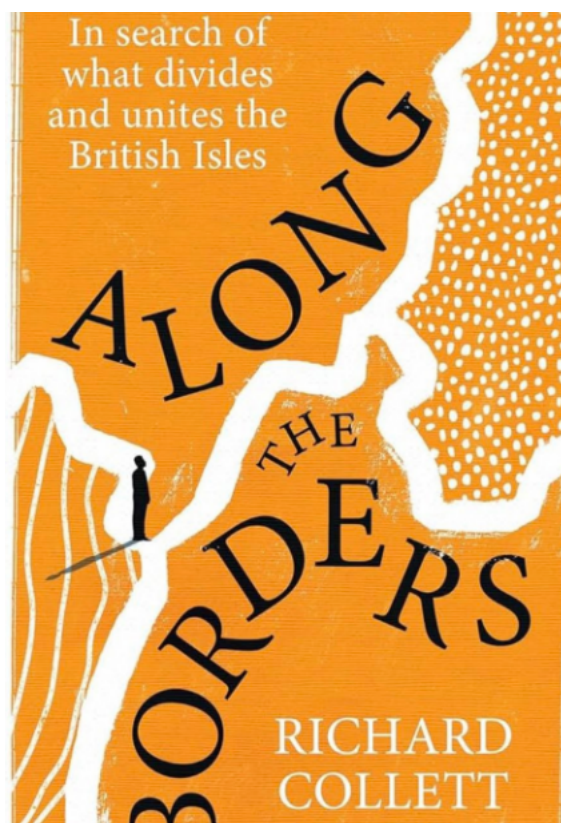
This is a fascinating book. The author is not an historian but a travel writer. Yes he has worked for the BBC, CNN and National Geographic but seasoned travellers will be more interested to see that he has also worked for Lonely Planet across the world.

This book is a personal, physical, journey in the present time along the borders, past, present and cultural. In fact the subtitle is the important part *"In search of what divides and unites the British Isles"*

The text is a travelogue of history, interviews with people, and the author's reflections long the Tamar, Cornish border, the Scottish Highland-Lowland divide, Kent and Northern Ireland as well as the English-Welsh and English-Scottish borders. This is about the people and culture as much, if not more so, than the history and dates. It is what the "ordinary people" see and feel.

After reading the book I realised that other than the thumbnail maps of the borders, there are no other images. It is the author who paints the pictures in words. That maybe a cliché but it is true, having been to many of the places mentioned; the text does paint an accurate picture of the places mentioned.

Where is Tamworth in this? It's in the chapter on the Dane Law border. The somewhat movable border from London to Chester between Mercia and the Danish held areas to the East. Tamworth was on both sides of the border for periods. Though the town romanticises the time Tamworth was in Mercia and the Mercia Lords past through on occasions. Readers should Google "map of Mercia" and then "Map of Dane Law" and try to reconcile them.



There are seven pages on Tamworth from the viewpoint of a world traveller who has seen the underbelly of many places across the world. It is what the author saw and felt on a November day in 2024. The Author spent time in Tamworth asking questions and it should be noted, talking to many more people than are actually quoted or mentioned in the book.

Yes, Tamworth has a long history but it was the present that cast a dark and depressing shadow, though with a glimmer of hope at the end. There is always hope and it helps to have an outsiders view to wake us up!

Tamworth aside it is a fascinating look at other UK borders and their history, and people in general. It should get readers thinking and looking at what divides and unites us. It should help all around.

Tamworth, the place and the people has major changes in the political structure over the next 18 months to a new chapter in the life of Tamworth so I suggest that: *This book should be required reading by all the town's officials and councillors as this is how others see us.*

Book Review

Top Secret Warwickshire

Michael Layton & Androulla Christou-Layton

Published: [Brewin Books](#)

ISBN 978-1-8585-8765-3

Softcover 256 pages

17cm by 24cm

Illustrations: 162 black & white

This is a fascinating book. OK the “*Top Secret*” seems like click bait as most people will have already seen some of the things in this book. However seeing a pill box in your area that has been there forever or that “everyone knows” where RAF Bramcote is (before it was an RN Station); it doesn’t mean people know why they are there or what the history actually was and what was actually done there? In many cases the “official” story was intentionally misleading

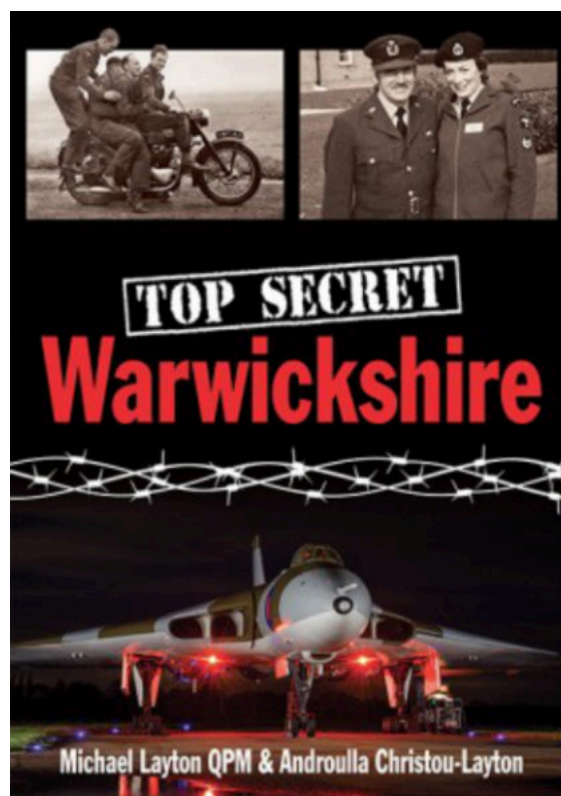
Most of the RAF stations are long gone, some are now housing estates or industrial parks, others farmers’ fields with a couple of strange out buildings. Of course the Prisoner of War camps have also gone now, but as they had no runway and only temporary huts, many have no idea they were even in the midlands.

Pill boxes... these were part of Stop Lines that ran for up to 100 miles. They were not just isolated things dropped around randomly or a specific local need.

Having flicked through the book I thought, much like the authors book for the [Top Secret West Midlands](#), this is something and nothing, places covered in a couple of sentences. This is true but this 250 page book would be 250,000 pages if it covered all of it in detail.

People write multiple books on the “*listeners*” system (page 63) and the Y Stations (page 74), along with any of the nearly 100 military and other installations.

In fact most things in mentioned in just a paragraph in this book warrant several books and a documentary. But you have to know about them in the first place and that there was one in your area of interest. Many were kept secret long



after the war and long after they had been removed. As noted their official story at the time was usually something different anyway!

This is where this book really wins home: A line, or paragraph, that is the key to unlock the hidden library.

That the authors are former Police Officers with a connection to the military and intelligence based policing shows in the way this book is put together. It is the preliminary investigation you need for anything connected to WW2 and certainly for the Cold War period. It also puts things into context.

Also you will see thumbnails of the towns in the region across time frame you are interested in that will point to other things you didn’t know about that impact what you are looking for. It is one of those books that will be the start point for your interest in a particular place or event.

The more I look at this book I realised that if you are looking at Warwickshire from WW2 through to the Cold War it will be a start point and save a many of hours of preliminary research. Also unlike Google this book is accurate. This is an essential book for anyone looking at Warwickshire WW2 to now.

The Holloway Society needs you!

As Winston said in 1940:
its all BLOOD, TOIL, TEARS
AND SWEAT

also chasing red herrings down rabbit holes!



The Holloway Society which includes the Tamworth Heritage Magazine also the Digital Archive and both Genealogy and History Research groups, has many on going projects. Our only problem is time. We could cut corners as others have done but the teams want do to things properly. This involves research, cross checking and often *chasing red herrings down rabbit holes!* Hence our motto!

We are looking for volunteers to help with the video team, the [digital] archive team, web team, general research, photography, magazine and book artwork and cover design. Despite most of our work being on-line, sometimes it means actually going to look at something physical in the wild outdoors. Occasionally working with authors to find additional material for their article from our extensive archive is required.

The current team ranges from their 20s to 70s Base skills needed are being computer literate. We are happy to utilise whatever skills you can offer. We can also provide training sessions and we have access to half day courses, which we encourage team members to take. New skills are often learned on the job.

We are a dispersed working group so we don't have formal meetings, though as we expand socials will be a good idea. In fact THM hasn't met some of the authors face to face, they come from across the UK. Its all email and phone!

So if you have an interest in documentary film making, journalism, photography, publishing, database design, catalogue creation, HTML web design, book design, cover art, researching, architecture, and of course any interest in history and heritage contact the Chair of the Holloway Society.

Volunteers do need to be 18+, own a computer and have internet access. The rest we can sort out. See www.HollowaySociety.org.uk

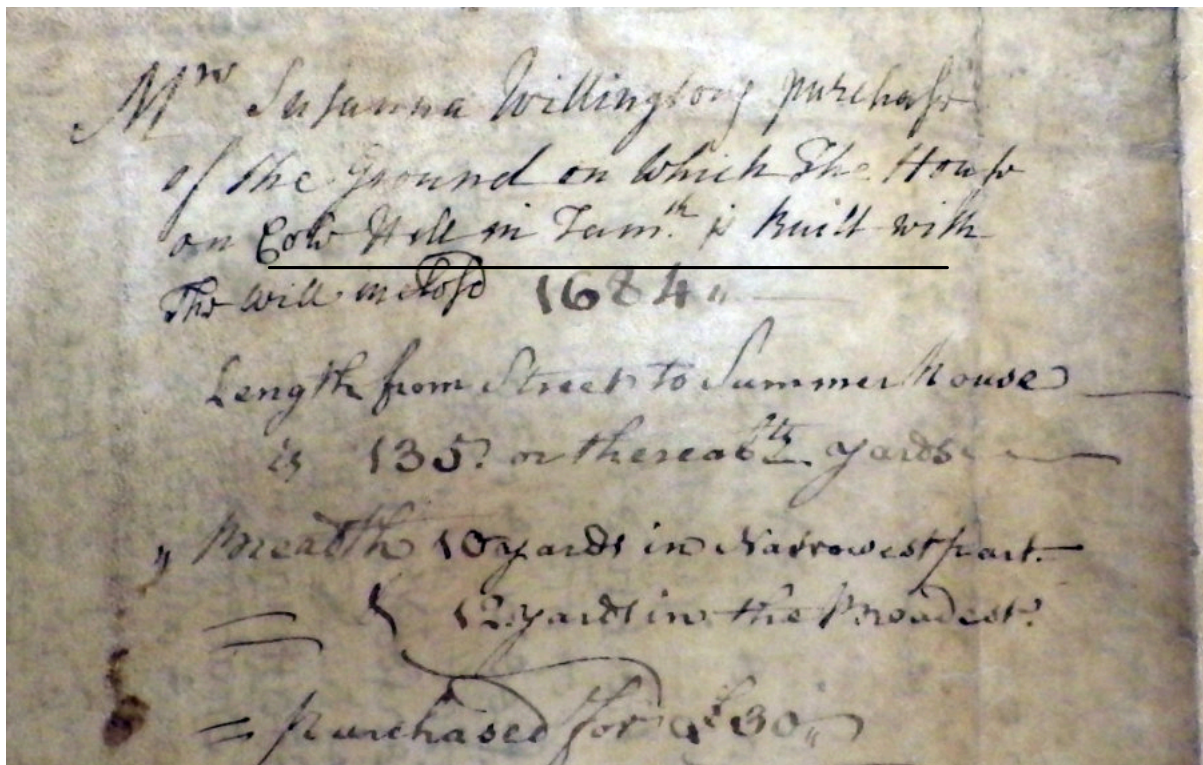
Contact Chair@HollowaySociety.org.uk

Come and Join the Team!



Persequimur allecibus rubrum in cavernis leporis

Letters to the Editor



Dear Editor

Do you know of a Cow Hill or Cow Mill at any time in Tamworth?

As you will see, my query is how the 'Cow' bit came to be written, to my thinking perhaps instead of 'Cole'?

You'll know all about Susannah Willington and Colehill of course so my thinking is that this supplementary title on the document has been verbally given and transcribed as cow as in cowl rather than the hard northern 'co' as in coal.

Spelling of the same word can vary in old documents and here the H of 'which The House' is totally different the H? after the word 'Cow' on the following line.

If it's hill or mill, the i does not appear to have been dotted as in other places. The W of the Cow very much matches the W of 'Will' below it.

Regards
Alan Hulme

Editor: The simple answer is: I don't know!

I pulled in a couple of teachers who claim to be able to read "any" hand writing but they were unsure. It could go either way on some of it. Though to be fair neither of them have researched the history of the area so they were not familiar with the place names or people it might have been.

Therefore I hope that perhaps one of our readers might be able to make some helpful suggestions. Does any one know an old cow in Tamworth? If any reader can work out what is said then the Editor would like to hear from you Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk

Dear Editor

The author asked if anyone knew where the zoo at Hints was....

Well, I drove past it last Friday! It was on Hopwas Lane at Hints, and as you head along the lane from Watling Street towards Hopwas, go past the first house, built in the 1960's on land that used to be an orchard belonging to the Wynn family...then past two semi-detached houses,

then the Zoo was on the grounds of the next bungalow on the right...and was run by the Badhams sisters...Mollie Badham...

This was where the PG Tips tea advert monkeys lived, the adverts were filmed in Hints Village Hall. They used to escape, and could be seen hanging from the gutters on the houses on the main road. I know, as I lived in one of those houses until the 1970's!

Hope this helps!

Richard Smith



The PG-Tips Chimps from Hints Zoo, in Hints from Hints Village Web site

EDITOR: Thanks for the information; we have done a search on the information and as per the Holloway Society motto: Persequimur allecibus rubrum in cavernis leporis we found some more information here <https://www.hints-village.com/zoo.html> also a book on the zoo that one of our members found. So we hope to do a full article on the zoo in a later issue. When I say "we" I mean inveigle a Holloway Society member to write it!

When we contacted the Hints Village Webmaster about the above photo he gave us permission to use the photo and the following information about Hints Zoo:

Molly Badham and Nathalie Evans were rival pet shop owners in Sutton Coldfield but joined forces to buy a 3/4 acre plot in Hints Lane and build a bungalow to house both themselves and their menagerie of animals. Members of the public took great interest in the animals and Hints Zoological Society opened its doors in 1954, becoming a popular tourist attraction. Villagers who still live in Hints fondly remember the chimps who went on to become famous for their TV advertising.

The collection of animals and the number of visitors grew to the point where a larger site was necessary, and in the summer of 1962 the Society moved to the Twycross site where it remains to today. In 2003 Molly received an MBE for her contribution to the conservation of endangered species. She sadly passed away in 2007.

The gardens to the bungalow were opened to the public during the Open Gardens and Flower

Festivals which were held annually until 2013.

In 2017 a headstone was erected in St. Bartholomew's churchyard in memory of the founders of Hints Zoo, who were Henry Oswald Evans, Audrey Eveline Evans, Sarah Nathalie Evans and Molly Winifred Badham.

Needless to say The Holloway Society has a team researching the Zoo but if anyone has any information or photos connected to the Zoo or owners please email

Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk

Dear Editor

Regarding the Two Gates POW camp it was where Reliant was (Tom Williams Way area) and some say it was where Doultons was (nearer the station/ MacDonald's) and I wondered if your collection of old maps would clarify that?

Regards
Margaret

EDITOR: This highlights a bit of a problem. The POW camps were temporary and leave little imprint on the ground. They were short lived, many 2-4 years and of course "secret" so they were not going to be put on (m)any maps and most of the ones they were on are "secret" See the review of [Top Secret West Midlands](#) for more on this and indeed their chapter on the POW camps does have a small map indicating the location of the Two Gates Camp.



Dear Editor

I moved into Leyfields between Salters Lane/ Masefield Drive and the Railway line about 3 years ago. I keep digging up iron artefacts in my garden [see photo above ED]. So far I have uncovered a dog nail, iron clinker presumably from a forge and recently an iron, gate or door hinge. It would suggest a forge was in operation here at some point, just curious if you were aware of such?

Also a strong magnet has produce evidence of "hammer scale". Then there was the pintle my wife found is hand forged. It may well be older than first appears. The hammer scale suggests it was forged on that spot. I am looking forward to your findings. I don't know if it helps but have attached a photo of where the forging were found by my wife. /Yellow circle [photo not reproduced for the home owners security Ed]

My wife has just unearthed un-earthed some clinker from a forge and a clay pipe remnant. Can you look at your maps and see what if any forge or industry might have been here before the houses were built?

Regards Charles Calthrope

EDITOR: Thanks for the information Charles. We are at this very time shuffling through a large pile of maps of the Tamworth area dating back to the late 1800s.

As they are large sheets of paper the same size as a dining table, it is a bit awkward and time consuming! However we will look to see what was there. Unless any reader knows what was north of the railway line? Especially any photos!

We do know that a lot of the housing estates around Tamworth, that were built from the 1960s onwards, were on ground that previously had a lot of heavy engineering factories in the 1800s and early 1900s.

Many of these would have had small forges, sometimes several, on site to make tools and fixings like nails and hinges for use on site. OTOH even the farms that were built on probably had a forge too.

When we have sorted the maps and done some research, and seen what any readers send in, we will report back. Or, more likely give Charles all the information we can find and let him piece it all together as an article for the Magazine...

Peel School June 2026
© Tamworth Digital Archive



Dear Editor

Regarding the Peel School in Lichfield Street: I have actually been in there for a quick glance around when one of the workmen invited me to take a look. I mentioned that I once worked there. I also knew the original developer because he was at school with my son now it's changed to a different developer and I don't know what's going on anymore apart from the pigeons of course who were getting through the top of a door until it was sealed. I know that they have removed the mezzanine and they've covered the fireplace.

I know that they have uncovered connecting door to the Coven pub they have not yet discovered the entrance to the cellar but when this sold white goods I am fairly certain that there was one I wouldn't go down it because it terrified me. This was around 1985 it sold white goods.

That was the year they took that big window out at the bottom I don't know how they ever got permission to do it or if they did but anyway they managed it and never got any complaints about it as far as I know

I took it that you have read Patrick's comments on it? [Click Here](#). It never was a chapel but there is apparently some talk of a ruin underneath it sometime back.

I've been reading up on this. It's highly illogical that the original building was moved lock stock

and barrel to its present situation if the building was originally part of the Moathouse which Patrick believed it to be. He has now decided that the Moathouse originally used to own extensive lands?

I don't think it was moved I think the Moat House originally owned all of that land because it's a on record that there was a great deal of selling off done in the Townshend era. A few years back there was a quite noticeable large area of land that began to collapse outside the houses on Sunset close. This got my attention obviously since it was

Regards Joan B

EDITOR: Joan as you know we have had a long standing interest in the Peel School and have managed to get back inside with a camera to record progress. As you say no mezzanine floor but the interior is probably looking better than when it was new. The central window has been replaced to as original as you can get. The owner is doing things properly.

We do intend to work with the owner to produce a full history of the building. It may have been part of the original Moathouse but I would be very surprised if it was moved. The original Moathouse grounds extended a fair way west and east. As you not Sunset close was once in the grounds. We will set a team to do some research but if anyone has any photos of the School in the past let us know!

Next Edition

Autumn 2026

Publication Date: 1st October

Copy Date: 16th September

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 Sept.

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.

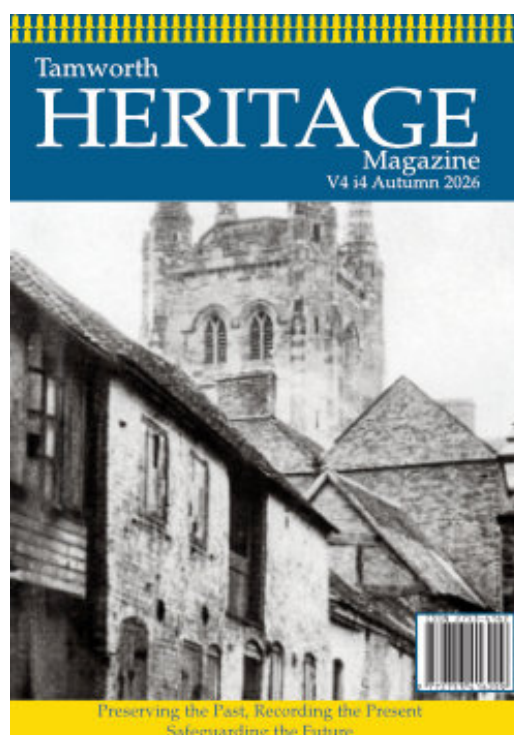
Please send in article/letters in text, RTF, MS doc or docx, we can even accept odt format.

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 4 Issue 4 and we hope to be a little more organised with what is in these issues than we were for volume 3.

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 4 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



Food Bank

Preserving the Past, Recording the Present
Safeguarding the Future