

Tamworth

# HERITAGE

Magazine

V4 i1 Winter 2026



Preserving the Past, Recording the Present  
Safeguarding the Future

# Tamworth Heritage Magazine

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



**Editor:** Chris Hills BSc FRSA, FRGS, RPS  
[Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk](mailto:Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk)

A published author for 45 years on history, culture, travel and related topics. He also runs

[Tamworth Digital Archive](#).

**Magazine Subscriptions:** Tamworth Heritage Magazine is free to download read or print for personal/school/Library use. It may not be lent or resold..

**Advertising:** The Tamworth Heritage Magazine will accept suitable advertising and sponsorship. To advertise email [media@TamworthHeritage.org.uk](mailto:media@TamworthHeritage.org.uk)

More information at <https://www.TamworthHeritage.org.uk/magazine>

---

**Cover Image:** South Staffordshire College, St Editha's Square, Tamworth, 2025 © JAmedia

**Back Image:** South Staffordshire College, Croft street, Tamworth, 2025 © JAmedia

---

## 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](http://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 Some how we are going somewhere...



This is always a strange editorial to write, as the forward looking Editor of a heritage magazine that looks back.

I am sitting amidst the chaos of Christmas shopping and insistence I “*must get the tree and decorations out of the attic*”, whilst writing this editorial for the first 2026 issue and starting to compile the spring issue for April. The April issue, being half-way through the four issues of Volume 4, makes it all feels a bit surreal.

One thing I have to do is *thank all the authors who contribute*. Not just those in Volume 3 but those who contributed to Volumes 1 and 2 that got us to Volume 3, and now Volume 4!

This also includes those who send in letters to the Editor, these letters often fill in blanks in articles, questions authors have raised in their articles, or often cause an article an issue or two later. As we say at THM *chasing red herrings down rabbit holes*.

One article last year, err... 2024 that is, caused an email to one of the team that led to a meeting a few months ago and we discovered an anomaly in the history of one of Tamworth’s pubs. More on that in the autumn issue, assuming we can complete the research. ([see page 42](#))

Without the contributing authors and letter writers there would not be a magazine at all! So thank you again one and all! Keep it up!

Yes this is volume 4 of the 5 I intend to do as Editor! I remember the first issue and how much has changed in 4 years. The team is starting to slowly expand. [See page 42](#) which is the answer to *Life, The Universe And Everything*, according to Douglas Adams. That it is on page 42 is one of life’s coincidences.

It is not just authors we need but researchers and a complete video media team, programmers and in the case mentioned someone to personally visit Tamworth’s pubs... Its a hard job but some one has to do it, and make notes, it not all play!

As you will see from the first article in this issue, history going back 3,000 years across Europe is relevant to England and indeed Tamworth last year, 2025, and the coming year. However you have to do the research and not just skim things.

Talking of which Happy... Well lets start with **Happy Christmas** and Advent, also St Nicholas the Saxon “Night of the Mothers” on the 24th and Celtic Wren day and the English/Celtic Mummers’ Day both on the 26 in different parts of the UK, the Norse Hogmanay in Scotland the old English Yule festival and of course, Happy Saturnalia 17-23<sup>rd</sup> December, the ancient Roman festival.

So Happy Holidays and in the words of the late great Dave Allen: *May your God go with you!*

We look forward to your company next year.

# CONTENTS

<b>Are You English? .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>By Tamworth Heritage Magazine</b>	
<b>This season's significant dates and events .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Tamworth and the Post Office .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>by Steve ward</b>	
<b>Frank Godfrey's Key .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>by Chris Hills, Jill Gadsby and The Man From The Pru.</b>	
<b>An Elford Childhood;: .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Part 8: The Village Hall</b>	
<b>By Doris BATTERY</b>	
<b>From Tamworth To Tamworth, a journey around the world .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>by Peter Allum</b>	
<b>Doorway to Tamworth .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>The tale of a Presentation Watch and a Legacy. ....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>by Roger Bragger</b>	
<b>An Ordinary Tamworth Man .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>by Prof Bryan Korth Jackelyn Pruitt and Prof. Pat Esplin</b>	
<b>Book Review: The Families that shaped Tamworth .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Tamworth Heritage Magazine need YOU Volunteers wanted .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Letters to the Editor .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>In the Next issue Spring 2026 .....</b>	<b>51</b>



## Are you English? by Tamworth Heritage Magazine

**Are you English? The recent spate of flags across England in the summer 2025 has raised the question: Who is English? How do you define what being English means. At least this crossed the Editor's mind as the Heritage Magazine team had been doing some research on Athelstan arguably the "First King of England", so "English" right? Well maybe...**

Nothing is going to be that simple in this investigation, especially when in passing I discovered that King Harold the last Saxon king who died at the battle of Hastings (with an arrow in his eye according to the Bayeux Tapestry) in 1066, some 127 years after Aethelstan, was not an English speaker! He spoke Danish as his family was mainly from Denmark i.e. The Anglo part of Anglo-Saxon.

So we started to delve into it. I was going to go back 2,050 years to just before the Roman invasion in 43 BCE but we have to go back nearly 3,000 years to around 700 BCE!

We have to go back that far because around 650 BCE a people called the Celts migrated to Britain. Well maybe...



The flag above is the flag of Genoa, Milan and Bologna in Italy, and Freiburg in Germany. It is also the flag of the Patron Saint of Palestine. The history of the English flag is as convoluted as the history of the people of England.

Below is the cathedral of Milan with the EU, Italian and Milanese flags.



Before the Celts it was various groups of Neanderthals and Homo heidelbergensis who died out before the Romans arrived leaving the dominant Homo sapiens. Incidentally the Neanderthals and Homo sapiens interbreed. Though there have been reports of Neanderthals in some of the bars in Tamworth on a Saturday night right into the 21st century...

It is all very hazy but multiple sources mention the Celts across Europe from 5,000 BCE. The Celts were a European wide people from the Czech Republic to Spain, and into Britain, all as small tribal groups.

However some *archaeologists* maintain the Celts arrived in Britain around 1500-750BCE, the Bronze Age, but many *historians* say they arrived around 650BCE, the start of the Iron Age. Either way the archaeology says numbers of Celts in Britain grew from 1500 BCE (some 3,700 years ago) and took over from whoever else was here.

There are no numbers for the population of the Celts in Britain but the Romans estimated there were ½ million people in Ireland or about 6 times the population of Tamworth now. So, maybe, 1.5 million people in Britain (that is England, Scotland and Wales), mostly Celts.

Then around 43 CE the Romans turned up. The Roman Legions aren't they? Well, not exactly! Here we go again... The Roman Legions were initially from Italy but as the empire expanded the Romans recruited from across the whole empire. If you recall the film *Gladiator*, Maximus was known as "The Spaniard" as he came from Spain not Italy.

Indeed the 9th Legion stationed in Britain was "Hispania" or Spanish Legion and the 14th Legion, "Gemina" was German. The Gemina Legion built a fort at Mancetter on Watling Street, so most of the original population of Mancetter and Atherstone are likely to have a lot of German DNA in them. The Roman Legions had all manner of European ethnicity in the ranks.

Except that there is more to it. Anyone who has been in the military knows that outside any long term base a town grows



up of people supplying goods and services of all sorts. All the excavations of Roman forts and towns show a huge non-military presence around them. In deed the Legio VI Victrix (6th Legion) stationed in northern England brought with them 5,500 Lazges Samaritans (effectively Iranians) So the 6th Legion would have been about 4,800 to 5,500 with 5,500 Lazges with additional merchants and suppliers and camp followers. You get the picture? A legion could be over well 10,000 soldiers, support people and camp followers.

The Roman presence in Britain, one way and the other, doubled the population of England.

They integrated with the locals. Just think how many British soldiers married German girls on their 3-5 year postings to Germany post WW2. The Romans were in Britain for decades at a time. Because of this Rome relaxed their rules on Legionnaires being able to marry in the UK. The Romans soldiers made friends and families it is known that 20th Legion, when it moved from Colchester to Gloucester, left behind a large number of veterans, with their families, who decided to settle there and call Colchester home.

There are still Italian restaurants in Colchester to this day, though the 20th also recruited in Germany as well as Italy which might account for the Mercedes and VW car dealerships in Colchester today.

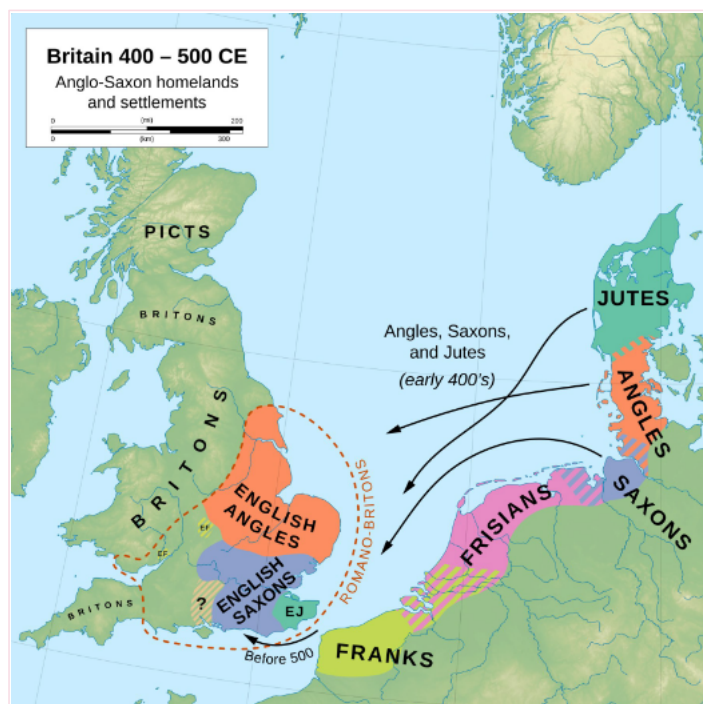
So when the Roman Empire declined and the

“Romans left” in 410CE It’s not that simple...

They didn’t leave! The Roman *Legions* were moved into parts of continental Europe. However, many of the non-military Romans or by now the Romano-British stayed put, as did many of the military veterans, who after their service, remained in England like those of the 20th Legion in Colchester. They had families here, not back in Italy (or Spain or Germany, or France etc). Some had been here for many generations. Remember the Romans were here 400 years that is about 16 generations so many of them and their support people only knew Britain.

So by 410CE England was very much a mix of Celtic and European DNA such as Spanish, German, Gaul’s (French) Franks (French-German), Slavs, Turks, Lombard’s, and a lot of Persian (Iranian) in the north of England. Indeed I know a former British Soldier whose family comes from the North East England discovered he has a lot of Middle Eastern DNA. He didn’t find out until long after his tour of duty in Iraq.

Wales and Scotland were probably more Celtic and less mixed. The higher incidence of Red hair in west Wales, northern Scotland and western Ireland also suggests this. Though, the Romans frequently had forts and people as far north as the Antoine wall between Glasgow and Edinburgh. Then over the next 100 years England was invaded by:



*Saxons* from Saxony (Northern Germany) in to Sussex, Surrey, Hampshire Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire Oxfordshire.

*Angles* from northern Germany/Denmark, into Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire Cambridge-shire, Northampton-shire Leicestershire, Lincolnshire etc.

*Jutes* from Denmark to Kent, Bits of east Sussex.

*Franks* from France to Hampshire and Wiltshire.

This influx was largely over Romano Britain i.e. England. So these European tribes intermixed with the already diverse Romano/British people who were Italian, Spanish, Gaul’s, Franks, Germans, and some Persians who had been mixing with the Celts for 400 years. Then came the Vikings! The Vikings are

not a race so much as “raiders” from Norway, Sweden, Finland and some from Denmark. Except they didn’t raid, so much as settle and raid from permanent bases in England and Ireland.

The common comment is “*rape and pillage*” and this happened a lot. They involuntarily, on the part of the ladies, intermixed their DNA with the areas they were raiding. As the population was sparse they used rivers and their shallow draft boats to go a long way inland to raid. So don’t think it was just coastal towns. In fact the *Danelaw* reached Tamworth which was a border town often under Viking rule.

As mentioned at the Battle of Hastings in 1066 Harold Godwin (the one in the Bayeux Tapestry) spoke Danish so England at the end of the first Millennium was a complete mix of European DNA with the Celtic parts being in a minority. Only existing in Northern Scotland and West Wales were the Celts were in a majority and less mixed.

Then the Normans turned up.... Here we go again; they took over all the Saxon lands which were basically, what is now “England”. They replaced, by force all the Saxon nobility, and brought in all their own people. This is why for the next 1,000 years the language of the Royal Court and posh restaurants is French. So again the population of England started to become interbred with the invaders.

However this is only part of the story. The other is the population levels. The population rose and fell, quite dramatically, during the first millennium. The Romans more than doubled the population over 400 years but it more than halved after the legions left due to famine and diseases. There were also fluctuations of the population during the Saxon period for similar reasons and not just because large numbers of men died in battles. It is believed a plague in the 6th century decimated the population. So whilst

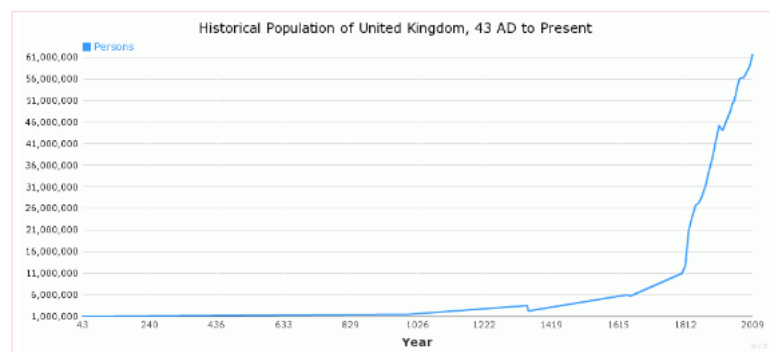


the population of Britain may have hit 2 to 4 million at times it also fell back to a million several times. Indeed it was at a low point both when the Romans invaded and the Norman-French 1,000 years later. The Domesday book records a population of 2 million after their invasion and some years of stabilisation.

This is important because having an near equal number of invaders to the native population after a couple 100 years most of the population will be completely intermixed, when the population falls and another influx again, as large as he current native population, arrives for a few 100 years. The same thing happens again. This means the original native population will have been diluted and interbred down to a minority.

In the last 1000 years there have been many other “invasions” but of a much smaller scale. Small influxes like the Huguenots from France. During the Crusades people brought back families and servants from the Middle East, Spain and North Africa (The first Crusade was to Spain that was held by the Moors from Africa and about 1/3 of Spain still has Moorish DNA)

Often the Royal Navy would press gang sailors from all round the world who retired to England.



Over the centuries additional DNA coming from the British Empire where Brits came back to the UK with foreign spouses, children, or servants. Something I have realised editing this magazine is that whilst many lived and died in a 10 mile radius of their village many people in England did travel extensively for work. Not just across England but further afield. Certainly as the British Empire grew.

Moving on to WW2 people from all over Europe arrived, mainly in England, and mixed in the UK. Not huge numbers but a few thousand each time. Recent research has shown that there are approximately 3,000 mixed race babies born in the UK during WW2 whose fathers were black American military. (The US Army was racially segregated well into the 1950s) We have no idea how many babies had white American fathers rather than a British father but there were more white American military than black American military in the UK. The American military in the 1940s were often only 1st, 2nd 3rd generation immigrants to the USA themselves. Not just from Europe but also central and south America.

The result of this is that the English, more so than almost any other country outside Europe, are a complete mixed breed of European DNA (and Persian in the north East). There is no such thing as an English DNA. For those who can trace your lineage to the Saxons, you are German. Assuming the records are correct which they frequently aren't.

Watch the TV program Who Do You Think You Are? And you will find that parentage and marriage records were often not as accurate as we would like to think. In my own family I know the name of my maternal grandfather's mother. Well, the one she used in England, which wasn't the one she used when getting here from Ireland. Except it appears that was a false name she used to leave Ireland. On the other hand his father was possibly Scottish or Dutch. Though, as far as my military service goes I am *British* but my DNA says "Heinz 57". English is a mixed breed.



### What about the Flags...

Well the red cross on a white background has been used by many cities and countries long before King Richard rented its use from Genoa around 1190 for use on English ships going through the Mediterranean. Hence the Royal Navy's White Ensign adopted in 1707



The same symbol was also used by the Knights Templar and Knights Hospitaller which are both European orders. It was and still is used by Genoa and Bologna in Italy, and Freiburg in Germany. It is also the flag of the Patron Saint of Palestine. St George had a Palestinian mother and retired to Palestine after serving in the Roman army.

The St George's flag was not used much, if at all in England until about 70 years later at the Battle of Evesham in 1265. It was used to denote the Kings army in the civil



war against the Barons. However it was seen as a religious flag rather than a national symbol by most of the English. It was not widely used in England.

By 1606 the Union Flag for Scotland and England replaced it until 1801 when the new version, we use now, adding Ireland arrived.



So the England flag was only used in England from about 1265 to 1606. It came back after WW2, initially used by far right groups and later by English sports teams and their fans. Though at some points there have been overlaps by the two groups, particularly in football. History is more convoluted than most people realise and history taught in school is much simplified.

# This season's significant dates and events

collated by The Editor



## January:

07/January/1725 - Thomas Guy buried

07/January/1839 - storm blew down the top of the southeast pinnacle and battlements of St Editha's Church Tower

14/January/1916 - earthquake shook the area causing damage to Polesworth Church

20/January/1989 - death of Beatrice Lillie, wife of Sir Robert Peel, 5th Baronet, and former actress, born in Canada on 1894.

30/January/926 - marriage of a Christian princess to a converted Viking in Tamworth

## February:

1st February 1963 - The Beatles play Tamworth Assembly Rooms. However as they were hungry they ate at The Moathouse. It is suggested they spent more time in the Moathouse than the assembly rooms! As a treat here is a video of the Fab four comparing Ready, Steady...Go! a few weeks after they were in Tamworth Click here <https://youtu.be/14pxCgghPcc> or on picture below.



24th February 1914 - fifty years before the Beatles the Tamworth Town Council met for the first time in the Great Hall of Tamworth Castle. February in the Great Hall... I bet that was cold!

26th February 1726 - 240 years before the Beatles: the first known postmark featuring the town of Tamworth. Rumour has it some letters still haven't been delivered! See article on next page...



## March

4th March 1916 - birth of Ernest Titterton This is the mathematician

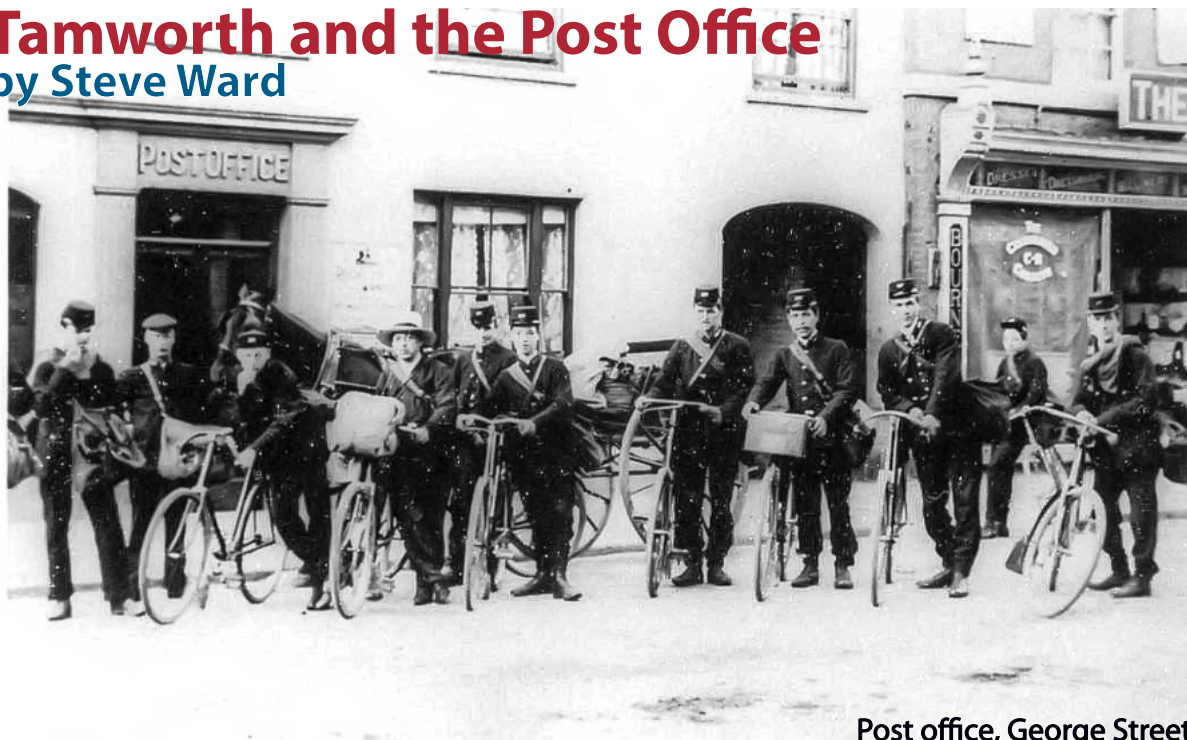
11th March 1326 - King Edward II visits Tamworth Castle. One of many Royal visits over the centuries.

12th March 1938 - the first four-cylinder Reliant vehicle was produced. Four cylinders but how many wheels?

27th March 1642 - birth of John Rawlet

# Tamworth and the Post Office

by Steve Ward



Post office, George Street  
© Tamworth Digital archive

*"No department of state touches the everyday life of the nation more closely than the post".* So began the 1927 book *The Post Office* by Sir Evelyn Murray. Things have changed in the last hundred years, but the Royal Mail (also referred to nowadays, erroneously, as the Post Office) still retains a special place in the hearts and folklore of the British.

Hardly surprising for an institution that arguably dates back to the reign of King John (1199-1216) when a network of messengers was created to convey the monarch's private correspondence. In 1609 the post became a royal monopoly – not so much to prevent competition but more to give the government access to the correspondence of suspected persons. In 1657 Cromwell established the General Post Office as *"the best means of discovering and preventing many dangerous and wicked designs which have been used and are daily contrived against the peace and welfare of this Commonwealth"*. But Cromwell had beheaded the monarch, so the modern Royal Mail (a.k.a. the Post Office) decided it was more politic to view 1660 as being the year of its foundation as that was when the monarchy was restored and Charles II established the General Letter Office.

Improvements – mainly to the roads – were gradual. By the late 1600s, Edinburgh and Plymouth could be reached in three or four days

from London; a century before, it had been three or four weeks. Postage costs were huge, but most people were illiterate and so had no need for correspondence.

In 1720 along came Ralph Allen, postmaster of Bath. He felt that through enterprising management and by the expansion of the relatively few existing cross posts (by which letters could be conveyed from, say, Stafford to Tamworth without having to go via London), he



Ralph Allen © Steve Ward

could revitalise the service and make it cheaper. The government awarded him a seven-year contract. Allen built up a postal system far in advance of that which he had inherited. He contributed a constantly increasing revenue to the state and coincidentally made himself a fortune of £500,000 (some £88m in today's money).

By the late 1700s there were over 40 mail-coach routes. The very first ran on the London to Bristol road (which eventually became the A4) in 1784. The mail coach reigned supreme for around 55 years until it was superseded by the train.

Yet the postage charging system remained onerously complex. Postage was paid by the addressee, not the sender. Letters comprising a single sheet of paper (folded to form an 'envelope') were charged at a single rate, letters comprising two sheets at double rate. A letter inside an envelope counted as double rate. This necessitated every envelope being examined in a strong light in order to determine its contents and calculate the appropriate rate. It was the duty of the licensed letter-carrier to collect the postage due from the addressee.

Furthermore, the calculation was difficult. In 1837 a single-sheet inland letter cost 4d for 15 miles (£1.60 in today's money, 6d (£2.40) for 30 miles and so on up to a shilling for each additional 100 miles. Ways were found of avoiding the expense. The poet Coleridge famously quoted an instance when, passing a run-down cottage in the Lake District, he saw a woman refuse a letter which the postman offered her. Out of sympathy but against the woman's firm wishes, Coleridge paid the postage due. The letter proved to be a blank sheet of paper sent by the woman's son. He had never intended his mother to accept it – it was simply a prearranged sign that he was well!

There were hundreds of unlicensed carriers, resulting in huge losses of revenue to the government. An unofficial letter-carrier in Scotland confessed to a Post Office enquiry committee appointed in 1838 that he had carried 60 letters daily for a number of years, yet he knew of others who carried 500 a day. Sweeping reforms were needed.



Rowland Hill © Steve Ward

Enter Rowland Hill, a Kidderminster schoolmaster with contacts in high places. He argued that by establishing a postage scale independent of distance and based solely on weight, the cumbersome processes which occupied a considerable staff and delayed deliveries could be swept away.

Postage should be paid by means of 'postage labels'. Letters destined for anywhere in Great Britain (which then included the whole island of Ireland), regardless of distance and weighing up to one ounce (28 gm), would cost a mere penny (around 37p in today's money, at the time or writing a UK 1<sup>st</sup> class stamp is £1.70 and 2<sup>nd</sup> class is 87p).

The government was vehemently opposed. The official reason was the damage to revenue but an unofficial reason was perhaps the likely sudden accessibility of the postal service to ordinary people, amongst whom literacy had been steadily increasing. Hill countered that *"any loss, even if large, would be more than compensated by the powerful stimulus given by low postage to the productive power of the country, and the consequent increase of revenue in other departments"*.

The press got to hear of Hill's proposals and was almost universally supportive. Public bodies took the issue up and the plan found ready



Penny Black  
© Stanley Gibbons



The THM legal adviser has told the Editor to say it is entirely coincidental that Christmas cards were invented in 1843 by Sir Henry Cole, only three years after the Penny black, whilst he working at the Public Record Office which he set up before it was re-named the General Post Office (GPO). The first year only 1,000 of these Christmas cards were printed. However, the idea did take off in following years.

favour with the business world. The government caved in and postage labels made their appearance in post offices on Wednesday 6 May 1840. They were nicknamed 'penny blacks' - they were black and they cost a penny - and have become famous ever since as the world's first postage stamp.

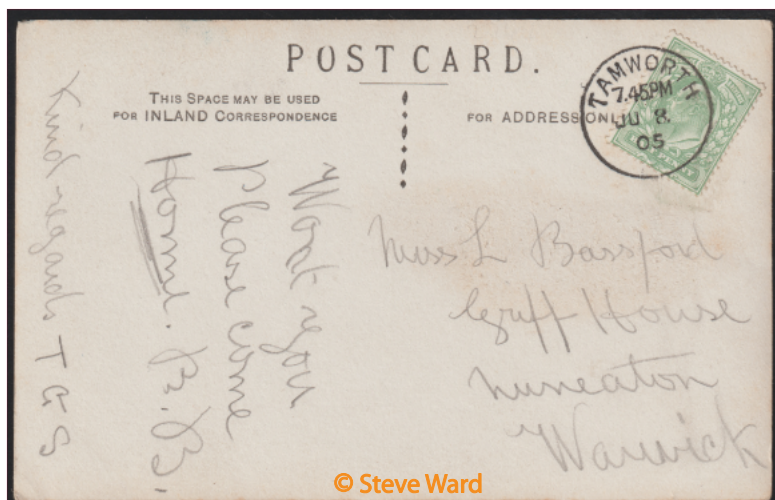
Although printed in their tens of millions, they can now be quite valuable. For many years, they were un-gummed, necessitating small pots of glue in post offices and households across the country. They were also un-perforated and had to be cut from the sheet with scissors. The concept of universal penny postage quickly embedded itself across society. Within a few years, most other countries had adopted similar systems.

The annual loss of revenue for the government following the introduction of penny postage had been estimated at £300,000 (£27m in today's money) and it wasn't until 1874 that the net postal revenue regained the level of 1839. With hindsight, however, that was hardly the point; postage and letter-writing were now accessible to almost everyone. The postal business grew hugely: the Post Office Savings Bank started in 1861, postal orders in 1881, parcel post in 1883, telegrams in 1885 and the General Post Office's (GPO) telephone system in 1896.

By the 1890s, nearly two billion (2,000,000,000) letters were being posted a year in the UK, 670 million books and circulars, and 150 million newspapers. There were several postal collections and

deliveries a day in towns, although generally only two in rural areas. In the days without telephones, the introduction in 1870 of a halfpenny rate for postcards (which themselves could be bought for as little as a farthing) quickly led to postcards becoming the usual form of communication (orders from shops, "Meet me tomorrow off 3 o'clock train", holiday greetings from Blackpool etc). These postcards often make for fascinating reading, as in the card posted from Tamworth in 1905 to Lucy Bassford at Griff House in Nuneaton - where she was probably in service - with the poignant request "Won't you please come home".

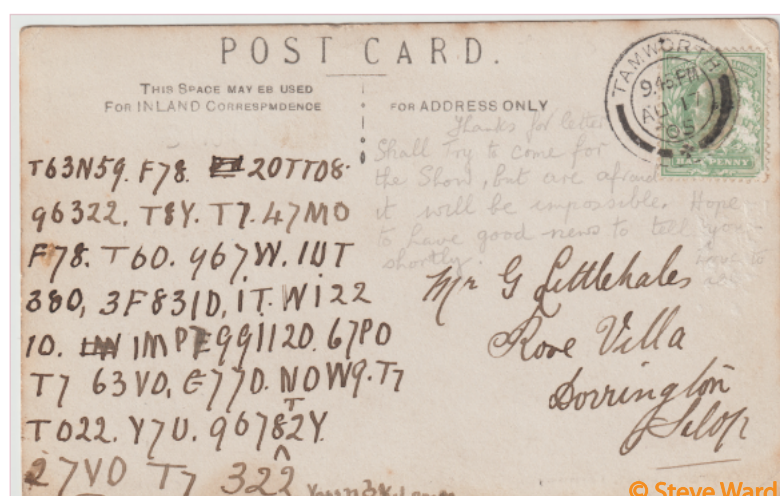
Incidentally, Griff House in Nuneaton was the childhood home of George Eliot (1819-1880), a.k.a. Mary Ann Evans. Some messages are intriguing, such as the card posted from



© Steve Ward

Tamworth in 1906 to the selfsame Miss Bassford, now at Dosthill Lodge, which starts "Thanks for the cheese, which we found all right ....".

The postcard peak was around 1910, when the numbers posted equated to five a week for every man, woman and child in the country. Cards were sometimes written in code so that the postman (or the recipient's parents!) couldn't read them. The one shown here is actually the reverse of the 1905 Carrick's card mentioned earlier. Someone has kindly added a pencilled decoding!



[Tamworth Digital Archive](https://tamworthdigitalarchive.org.uk) is currently cataloguing over 1,200 postcards from Tamworth dating back to the 1860s most of which have messages on the back.

If anyone would like to help the cataloguing please contact the [Editor@Tamworthheritage.org.uk](mailto:Editor@Tamworthheritage.org.uk)

If any reader can crack the code on the postcard to the left there will be a prize for the first correct answer.

From 1840 onwards, the public needed to have access to this wide-reaching postal organisation and, of course, to buy stamps. Receiving Offices had existed for many years, being locations where letters could be handed in for onward transmission, but there were few outside larger towns or those villages located on coach routes.

walking post offices, accepting parcels and registered letters and selling stamps to anyone unable to visit a post office. Hardly surprising that the Royal Mail was viewed with such affection. But one myth should be dispelled. Older people's memories sometimes play tricks. Not since 1960 in England have there been deliveries on Christmas Day (unless it happened to fall on a Sunday; Sunday deliveries of letters in England had ceased in 1912).

The advent of penny postage led to the rapid growth of post offices which not only sold stamps but also provided an ever-increasing array of services including insurance, pensions, taxation licences (dog, gun, game, motor vehicles). There were some 5,000 offices in 1840, 10,000 in 1850, 22,000 in 1900, a peak of 25,055 in 1965 (figures provided by The Postal Museum), but down to 11,805 in 2024 (5,088 in rural areas, 6,717 in urban - figures from government statistics).

An official postal service - however defined - seems to have reached Tamworth quite late. The town wasn't named on a 1677 Horse Posts Map of the Chester Road (from London to Chester and thence Holyhead), nor on a 1756 map Great Roads and Principal Cross Roads - in both instances being upstaged by Coleshill and Lichfield.

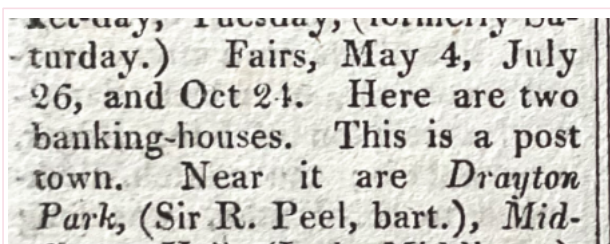
Until the 1920s, the rural postmen (and, increasingly after the onset of World War I, postwomen) had an importance all of their own. They were not only deliverers of letters but also

Tamworth did however make an appearance on an early 1800s map as a key town on the direct mail-coach route from London to Holyhead, although not on the east-west Lincoln to Bristol

route (on which the nearest town was Lichfield). Perhaps the Staffordshire-Warwickshire border which bisected the town until 1889 prompted county rivalries and a resultant loss of civic status vis-à-vis Lichfield (fully in Staffordshire) and Coleshill (fully in Warwickshire).

A Receiving Office was established in Tamworth in the 1780s. The town was decreed as being 117 miles from London for inter-town postage assessment purposes. (Google Maps indicates 122 miles via modern roads.) There is no evidence for the town ever having had a local 'Penny Post', being a government concession whereby letters for collection and delivery within a town were charged one penny. That honour did, however, fall to both Atherstone and Lichfield.

Despite devoting two columns of small print to Tamworth (including the sentence, "*The town is noted for good ale*"), W C Oulton's 1805 Traveller's Guide states blandly, "*Here are two banking-houses. This is a post town*".



Evidence is currently lacking, but the receiving office / post office may well have always been on the southern side of George Street, one building away from the junction with Bolebridge Street. My photos show a Carrick's card posted in 1905 and a magnified section showing the post office.

It remained there\*, becoming increasingly cramped, until July 1958 when it relocated to



purpose-built premises in Lower Gungate. In the very early 2000s it moved to the Co-op department store at the eastern end of Church Street and then to the Co-op supermarket at the other end of the same street.

\*However, an 1885 Ordnance Survey map suggests that the post office occupied the whole of the corner block.



The number of sub-post-offices in Tamworth reflects the expansion of the town as regards population and boundaries and, sadly, the demise of post offices.

The population (including the parish of Fazeley) was around 8,000 in 1840 (the year of the Penny Black),  
 15,000 in 1900,  
 25,000 in 1960,  
 55,000 by 1980  
 and upwards of 80,000 now.

Post Office on George Street and zoom in to PO front © Steve Ward

The town's first sub-office was The Leys in 1895 (closed 2003), followed by Lichfield Street in 1928 (closed 1978), Borough Park 1929 (closed 2008), Bolehall 1934, Masfield Drive 1960, Silver Link 1971, Coton Green 1976, Kerria Road 1978 (closed 2004), Stonydelph 1979, Tame Valley 2014 (closed 2018) [Click here](#) or below for video of the last letter going over the counter at the Tame Valley Co-op post office, Chartwell 2019, Ventura Park 2022.

Some post offices which had originally been classified as 'rural' had, over the years, become town sub-offices: Amington 1886, Belgrave 1930 (closed 2005), (Glascote 1877 (closed 2002), Kettlebrook 1878 (closed 2004).

Tamworth's status as a 'post town' (being, in modern times, an administrative centre responsible, inter alia, for letter sorting and dispatch) meant that the head post office in George Street / Lower Gungate had numerous rural offices under its jurisdiction:

Alvecote 1898-1997\*, Birchmoor 1904-2001, Clifton Campville 1851 (as simply 'Clifton'; 'Campville' was added in 1858 to differentiate from all the other Cliftons around the country) to 1995, Dordon 1887, Dosthill 1895-2005, Drayton Bassett 1861-2005, Edingale 1911-2000,

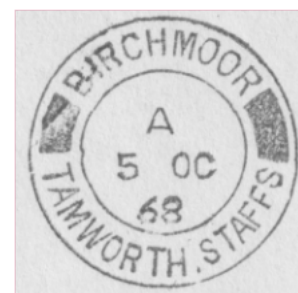


Post Office © Tamworth Digital archive



Elford 1845, Harlaston 1853 (as 'Harleston' but changed in 1895 to the modern spelling to avoid confusion with the town Harleston in Norfolk) to 2024, Hints 1900-1987,

Hockley 1936-2005, Hopwas 1896-2008, Kingsbury 1848, Middleton 1857-2001, Mile Oak 1931, Newton Regis 1854-2024,

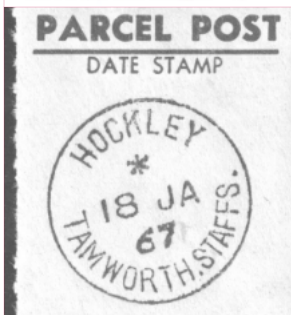




© Tamworth Digital archive



Hockley Post Office. © Tamworth Digital archive



\*Years quoted are when the office opened and ceased, although some offices did close and reopen in the interim.

Polesworth 1849,  
 Seckington 1895-1941,  
 Shuttington 1873-1968,  
 Two Gates 1903-2005,  
 Warton 1872,  
 Wigginton 1860-1968,  
 Wilnecote 1848-2005.

The fact that some small villages (e.g. Clifton, Elford, Harlaston, Newton Regis) had post offices in the very early days is probably a reflection less of their size and more of their having a wealthy inhabitant with connections and clout!



And Fazeley? Fazeley lay on a key crossroads and was favoured by a post office as early as June 1824 under the jurisdiction of Birmingham (not falling under Tamworth until 1840).

Tamworth's location was such that the railway arrived early. The original station was built in 1839

by the Birmingham and Derby Junction Railway Company on its line from Derby to Hampton-in-Arden. In 1847 the London and North Western Railway Company opened its Trent Valley line. Tamworth was on two lines! Important though that was, Tamworth Station was never honoured with its own on-site post office, unlike other local towns such as Stafford and Rugby.

From the mid-1840s to 2004, trains - which almost immediately became the prime means of conveying letters and parcels long-distance - incorporated travelling post offices (TPOs) (a.k.a. railway post offices, sorting tenders or sorting carriages) on many of their main lines. In 1850 Tamworth became a hub for the Gloucester & Tamworth Railway Post Office and in 1857 for



the Tamworth & Shrewsbury Travelling Post Office, which had its own postmark to prove it. TPOs became a key part of the country's infrastructure. W H Auden's 1935 poem Night Mail, which encapsulated the romance of the system, started with the lines:

*"This is the night mail crossing the Border,  
Bringing the cheque and the postal order,  
Letters for the rich, letters for the poor,  
The shop at the corner, the girl next door."*

Travelling Post Offices were discontinued in 2004.

From the 1600s until today, the authorities have needed a process which provides proof of how much postage had been paid, where the item had been posted and so on. The postmark was born.

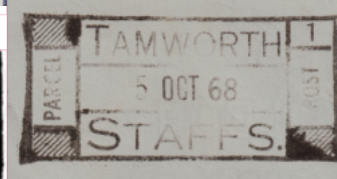
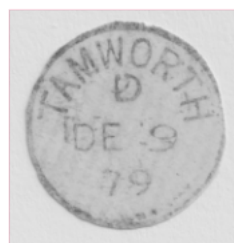
As Tamworth seemingly had no officially recognised postal service until the late 1700s, it had no official postmarks until then. One of the earliest would simply have been an undated single-line mark 'TAMWORTH' made of wood or metal and stamped on letters posted at the receiving house. (Hence the later use of the word 'stamp' to describe the item that proved that postage had been paid.) Within a few years, the postmark incorporated the mileage to London - as per the illustration of the mark from Bolton (in the

absence of my having seen one from Tamworth!) - in order to calculate the postage to be paid by the recipient.

With the introduction of postage stamps in 1840, a further reason for postmarks was added: to cancel the stamp to prevent fraudulent re-use. Each post office was issued with its own distinctive 'obliterator'.

Initially they showed only the post office name (e.g. WILNECOTE) but the design was later standardised as to post office name + post town (where appropriate) + county, such as TAMWORTH / STAFFS or WILNECOTE / TAMWORTH / STAFFS.

Note that the 1d stamp with the 1934 postmark is upside down. This was either an error on the



sender's part or deliberate – many people used prearranged 'codes'. An upside-down stamp might have meant 'I love you', for example, or a sideways stamp 'Can we meet?'.

I illustrate an example of postmarks from Kingsbury from 1899 (which pre-dates the introduction of the name of the post town into postmarks) and 1968. But as there are several Kingsburys in the country, 'ours' was soon differentiated by the addition of the county name. When the name of the post town was added to postmarks, however, the county of the post town took precedence – hence KINGSBURY / TAMWORTH / STAFFS.



Until the 1920s it was customary for letters posted in rural areas to be postmarked by hand at the local post office and then taken to the appropriate post town (e.g. Tamworth) for sorting and onward dispatch. Important offices such as Tamworth were also allocated numbers for administrative purposes. Tamworth's was 774.



By the late 1930s it was considered more efficient for all letters and parcels to be postmarked at the post town itself, for which purpose machines were steadily introduced. My illustrations are of different designs of machine cancellations used in Tamworth from 1937 to 1990. (See following page for image) By the 1980s, centralised sorting offices were becoming common, giving rise to 'generic' machine postmarks such as COVENTRY AND WARWICKSHIRE or BRISTOL BATH TAUNTON.

Crucially, date-stamps were also used to give legal validation to documents such as postal orders, television licences, Savings Bank books. The devices had to be diligently maintained and properly guarded – it didn't take long for criminals to realise that there was no point in stealing postal orders, for example, unless they also stole the date-stamp. But as documents became automated, centralised, computer-produced or abandoned altogether, date-stamps became ever less frequently used. Every post office still has one, but only rarely must it be unearthed from a drawer. Office date-stamp impressions (i.e. postmarks) such as those illustrated above are now seldom encountered. Postmarks of closed offices are particularly rare.

As a wry aside, punctiliousness in date-stamp wording (see above) often disappeared following the fragmentation of the Royal Mail / Post Office. Modern sub-office date-stamps commonly have a meaninglessly short inscription such as HIGH STREET, which is not helpful if proof is required at a later date as to which post office in the UK validated a document!

The Post Office / Royal Mail are not what they used to be.

Under the Post Office Act 1969, the General Post Office changed from being the government department it had been for centuries to a statutory corporation known simply as the Post Office. The office of Postmaster General was abolished and replaced by the positions of chairman and chief executive. In 1986 the Post Office was subdivided into four businesses: Royal Mail Letters, Royal Mail Parcels, Post Office Counters and National Girobank. Under the Postal Services Act 2000, the Post Office became a public limited company. On 1 January 2006, the Royal Mail lost its 350-

year monopoly and the British postal market was opened to competition. In 2012 Royal Mail and The Post Office were legally separated. Royal Mail shares were floated on the London Stock Exchange and the company is now owned by a Czech businessman. The Post Office remains a public corporation owned by the UK government.

The advent of the internet, email and smartphones has resulted in the number of letters posted falling dramatically year on year. At the time of writing, New Zealand Post is reducing deliveries to twice a week and generally only to central collection points. Denmark's state-run postal service PostNord will end all letter deliveries at the end of 2025, citing a 90% decline in letter volumes since 2000, bringing to an end 400 years of the country's letter service. Denmark's 1,500 post boxes began to disappear from June 2025 and the country's post offices will be 're-purposed'.

Royal Mail estimates that there are some 85,000 pillar boxes (on streets) and letterboxes (set into walls or attached to poles) across England alone, a figure which has remained more or less unchanged since the 1920s. The very first street box was in St Helier (Jersey) in 1852. Until then, letters had to be handed in at a post office. The boxes were green until 1874, when someone in authority decided that red was a more distinctive colour.

any of today's 85,000-odd boxes can go a week or more without having a letter pushed through the slit and yet they still have to be opened several times a week by the passing Royal Mail van.

I fear that the Post Office / Royal Mail with its post offices, postmarks, iconic red letterboxes and friendly posties faces a rather bleak future.



## Sources

- [Sir Evelyn Murray, The Post Office, 1927;](#)
- [Stanley Gibbons, Collect British Postmarks;](#)
- [Archibald Bowie, The Romance of the Post Office, 1897;](#)
- [A Robertson, Great Britain Post Roads and Postal Rates 1534-1839, 1961;](#)
- [British Postmark Society;](#)
- [Great Britain Philatelic Society;](#)
- [Census records;](#)
- [Ordnance Survey;](#)
- [Bank of England's online Inflation Calculator;](#)
- [My own collection.](#)



Prudential Key © Victoria Rogers & DIGGERLEE

At 21 you used to get the Key to the Door, but this one is 22, 1922 to be precise and was presented to Mayor Frank Godfrey. It was brought to your editor's attention by one of the team who had seen it on eBay....

It had been on [DIGGERLEE's Georgian House Collectables](#) page for a while and a discount might be available to a good home such as a museum! This initiated calls to the Tamworth Castle Museum with a suggestion they might like to obtain it. The Castle Museum dispatched the Friends of the Castle and they got it at a price everyone was happy with.

So what is the key? We started to research and found it had been presented to Mayor Frank Godfrey on the 5th January 1922 by Mr A Jones, the local Superintendent of the Prudential Assurance Company on the occasion of the opening of their new office at 35 Market Street.

We scoured our archives but no pictures. We called the Prudential and their Archivist delved into their records, but nothing! If anyone has any pictures of 35 Market Street in the 1920s that show the Pru's office both your editor and the Man From The Pru will be eternally grateful to see them! The building had previously been the London Joint City and Midland Bank and any pictures of that will be gratefully scanned!!



Turning to the key itself, the eBay listing says silver plated, but the Herald article says gold plated, though the eBay listing says "it had originally been gilt and wearing off now in places". I am sure after an inspection by the Archive some time next year we will know if it is gold or silver and indeed what the base metal is.

It has been engraved with: *Presented to Frank Godfrey Esq. Mayor of Tamworth* on one side and on the other: *on the occasion of his opening the Prudential Office 5.1.22*

Given the way it is written and spaced I would think the key is from a range of standard presentation keys with an individual engraving. Especially as the box has no engraving or label and there are no makers marks. Hence as the Pru Archive doesn't have one, or photos of the event, then it is probably unique *in this form*.

The Herald article says that the gold key was presented to the Mayor by Mr H. M. Dimbleby, on behalf of the contractors who did the alterations and the Mayor unlocked the door. This suggests that it might actually be a real working key. So there will be more than one of them, just not engraved as this one.

There were, of course, speeches, which may have been politely listen to by those hoping for them to end soon do give the historian a lot of useful information. It seems that from the 1880s through to the 1920s Tamworth was expanding industrially. The Pru had started in Tamworth in 1898, when *The Man From The Pru*, would walk round the houses collecting money, often a penny a week, for your life insurance policy. This was new to the working classes but given the lack of work place safety and no welfare state it was the only safety net for most working class families should the bread winner be killed or incapacitated.

In deed nationally, in 1920, the Pru paid out £9.5 million in sickness and disability benefits and £500,000 in maternity benefits all under the National Health Insurance Act. This was before the UK progressed to the NHS and National Insurance 30 years later after WW2 .

Mr A Jones the Superintendent when these new offices were opened had started in Tamworth 14 years before in 1908. At this time the branch in come was an astounding £220 for weekly premiums and £700 for monthly premiums Giving an annual branch income of £40,000 (or



Prudential Key © Victoria Rogers & DIGGERLEE

the equivalent of £4.2 million in 2025!!).

As well as the key the Mayor was presented with a cheque for 20 guineas (£21, or £1,000 in 2025) for Tamworth Hospital.

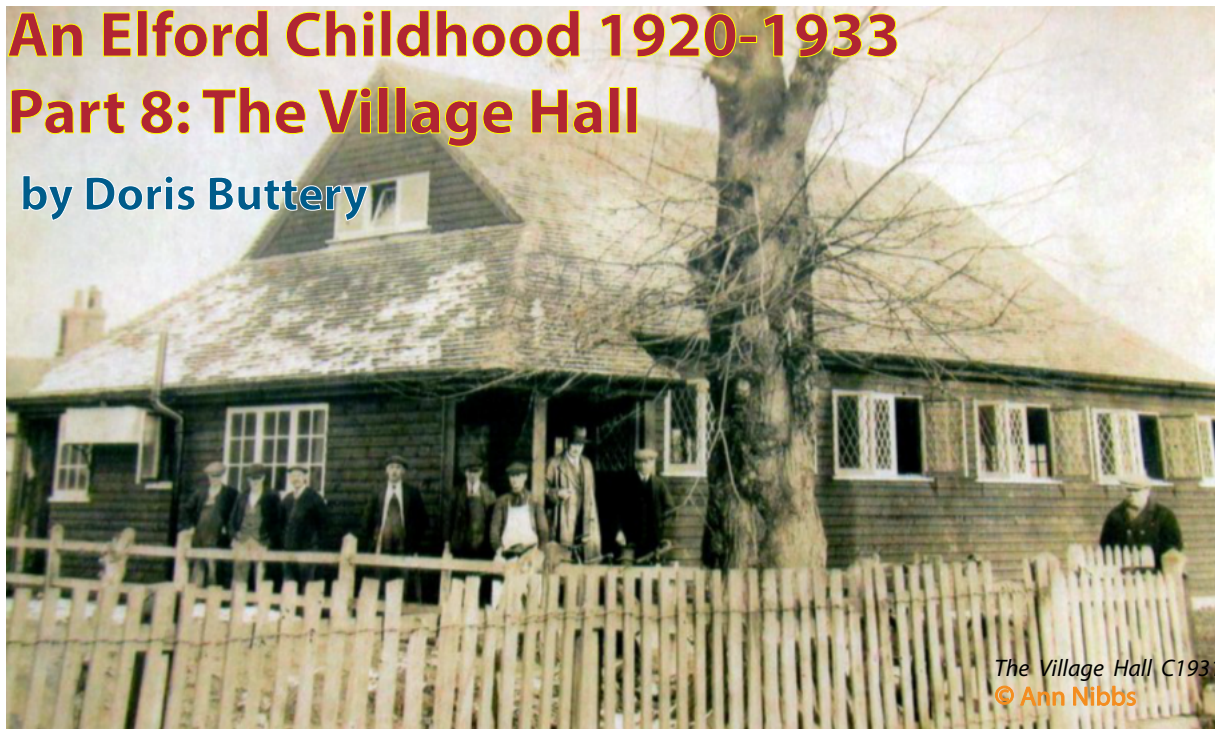
Interestingly the Herald article notes that the building had been upgraded from electric lights to gas lights! Though later in the speeches at lunch Mr Jones said he hoped that electric lighting would come along soon. WE clearly have some more research to do here.

If anyone has any information on the Prudential Assurance Co, memories of The Man from the Pru, or 35 Market street [please email the editor](#) as this clearly needs a much longer follow up article.

# An Elford Childhood 1920-1933

## Part 8: The Village Hall

by Doris Buttery



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

### The Village Hall

Dad took an active interest in everything connected with the village and was soon on the Parish Council.

At this time, there was only one place in the village where meetings and social functions could be held - the school. Clearly, a Village Hall was badly needed, and a committee was formed under the chairmanship of the rector. This soon struck problems however, because the rector wanted the Hall to be built on church-owned ground so that the church would have the major say in anything to do with the Hall.

Many people could foresee problems with such an arrangement. For starters, it would mean that there could be no social functions during Lent. The proposal was rejected, and the rector promptly resigned (from the committee) along with the churchwarden and sexton.

Eventually, a new committee was formed under the chairmanship of Mr Porter, a Birmingham businessman who lived in a beautiful house near

the centre of the village. Dad was a member of the committee and meetings were held at Mr Porter's house.

We got to know Mr and Mrs Porter very well. He came often to our house. I used to be invited to have tea with Mrs Porter on my way home from school. She had a large grey parrot called Polly and a cairn terrier called Andy. The two were sworn enemies.

Tea with Mrs Porter was usually an eventful occasion, and I don't ever remember having much to eat. Most of the time seemed to be taken up with separating the two belligerents.

On one dreadful occasion, Polly managed to land on Andy's back and clung on, swearing furiously as the poor dog charged frantically round the drawing room, banging into furniture in an endeavour to dislodge the unwelcome jockey. When Mrs Porter managed to pluck Polly from her 'perch', there were two red, bald patches on Andy's back and great tufts of dog hair in the parrot's claws. Polly was chained to her proper perch after that little episode.

The Village Hall committee organised various fundraising activities in the schoolroom and bought some land in the centre of the village. At the end of two long years, they had raised sufficient capital to build the Hall and erected a

wooden building with diamond pane windows, which fitted in well with its surroundings.

The grand opening was a truly memorable occasion. Music came from the Hollywood Dance Band who travelled over from nearby Alrewas. All the ladies who attended wore new dresses, and the men donned their best navy blue. Admission was one and sixpence.

It was decided that a weekly dance would be held, admission sixpence, every Friday night. For this, Mrs Wallis, the railway signalman's wife, played the piano, alternating with Mr Green, the railway linesman, on the melodeon. These dances proved popular and were well attended.

On Boxing Day, Easter Monday and Whit Monday, as well as various times in between, there would be a Grand Dance when the men wore their best suits and the ladies their prettiest dresses. Summer Dances, like the one on August Bank Holiday Monday, were billed as Flannel Dances and men wore sports jackets and flannels, but the girls usually wore their best dresses to those as well.

Admission, where a proper band was playing, never cost more than one and sixpence. There were always plenty of refreshments, with tea at one penny a cup and large ham sandwiches at threepence each. Fizzy lemonade at a penny a big glass and fancy cakes were also available, but no intoxicating liquor of any kind. If you wanted

that, you nipped out to The Crown, but not many people bothered.

The men of the Committee took turns at being on the door, and admission was always strictly by ticket only. If anyone wanted to pop out during the dance, he or she was given one half of a ticket to enable them to re-enter. It did not matter how well one was known to the person selling the tickets, the rules were firmly adhered to. There was never any trouble of any kind.

The doors were firmly closed at ten p.m. so that anyone who had spent the evening at the pub was not allowed in, even with a ticket. An exception was made for Mr and Mrs Rowe, the landlord and his wife, since it was their job which had kept them away until 'closing time',

Whist Drives and, Whist Drives and Dances were popular and always attracted many people young and old. And there was a variety of other entertainments.

Mr and Mrs Porter's house-parlour maid, tired of going into Tamworth every Saturday night, got together a group of nine and ten-year-olds. We rehearsed little play-lets and poems and put on a concert at the end of the summer.

Then there were visiting concert parties, of a uniformly high standard. All amateur of course, and all good clean fun with plenty of audience participation.



Elford1930s  
© Tamworth Digital archive



The dray dressed for May Queen celebrations May 1 1932  
© Ann Nibbs



Every August Bank Holiday morning, it was time for the annual village flower show. Dad always took the prize with his roses, but no one could touch the Servin brothers with their vegetables. They exhibited their produce at all the village shows for miles around and must have won a lot of money each year.

They were great gardeners and never exhibited anything they had not grown themselves but, as happens in every small community, their continuing success caused a certain amount of jealous comment from those who went empty away. Some suggested that perhaps it would be

Mayday Maypole Celebrations 1932  
© Ann Nibbs

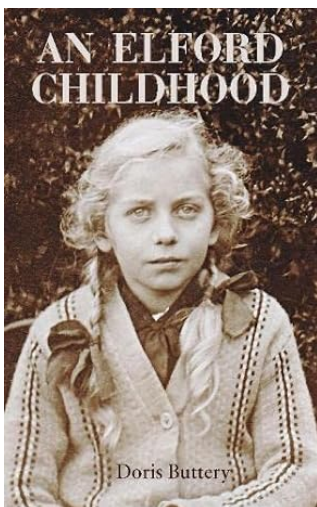




a good idea for the gardens of competitors to be inspected before the show. The brothers readily agreed, and nothing further was done about it.

There was always a mad scramble at five o'clock to get the Hall cleared of flowers and vegetables ready for the evening dance, due to start at eight o'clock. Dad used to come home, puffing and panting, to wash, shave and change, and off we would go again, to dance until two in the morning.

Yes, the children went as well, if their parents liked to take them. I cannot remember a time when I could not waltz or foxtrot or do the veleta or military two-step. I suppose we must have been a bit of a nuisance to the adults, but I don't think anyone complained.



Everyone was too intent on enjoying the evening, and country folk were a tolerant lot on the whole.

**Doris in 'fancy' dress outside their home, Mill Cottage , Elford. 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 1932**

© Ann Nibbs



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



Tamworth NSW Australia © Peter Allum

## From Tamworth to Tamworth: A Family Journey Across the World by Peter Allum

When I first decided to trace my family history I didn't expect it to lead me halfway around the world, or to a coincidence that connected my home in Tamworth, Australia, with Tamworth in the United Kingdom. What began as a simple exercise to pull together a few family facts, became a much deeper journey into how and why my ancestors moved from one Tamworth and I to the other.

### Finding Alfred John Allum

My research started with the Allum line on my father's side. Within a short time I traced the family back several generations and found an Alfred John Allum, who died in Sydney in 1928 aged 76. He was buried in Ashfield Cemetery alongside his parents John and Elizabeth Allum. At first it seemed like a standard genealogical record until I saw that Alfred's birthplace was

listed as Tamworth. Since I've lived in Tamworth, New South Wales, for about twenty years that caught my attention. A quick check confirmed the obvious, Alfred had been born in Tamworth, Staffordshire, in England, not Australia. Still the coincidence was striking and prompted me to learn how this English family ended up in Sydney.

### The Journey to Australia

Australia keeps good records of early immigrants, and I soon found that John and Elizabeth Allum with their one year old son Alfred, had arrived in Sydney in 1853. They came as Assisted Immigrants aboard the ship 'Harriet', which left Southampton with 381 passengers bound for Port Jackson. It must have been a major decision for a young couple to leave everything they knew for a long and uncertain



The Harriet, above, it seems from the survey report, right, was built in 1852 in Quebec, but registered and surveyed in London in March/April 1852. Harriet sailed from Plymouth on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1853 and was quarantined on arrival, 30<sup>th</sup> May, which appears fairly standard practice landing passengers on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1853.

Subsequent surveys over the years were also in London. More information can be found on both the ship and passengers at [Lloyd's Register](#) and [WikiTree](#)

sea voyage. The trip itself took around two and a half months. I was lucky to find a diary kept by Thomas Cole, one of the passengers on the ship 'Harriet', which gave a real sense of what they faced. Births and deaths on board, a sailor lost overboard, even a minor mutiny. After all that, the ship finally reached beautiful Sydney Harbour only for the passengers to be quarantined on board for a couple of weeks before disembarking. It would have been a testing experience for anyone let alone parents travelling with a one year old baby.

**Life in Tamworth, England**

To understand what led them to emigrate I looked back at their lives in England. Records show that John Allum married Elizabeth Hunter at St Editha's Church in Tamworth on 1 April 1850, and their son Alfred was born the following year. John worked as a grocer on Bolebridge Street and was the son of Richard Allum who kept the Globe Tavern in the Gungate street.

Richard appears often in local records as the tavern's innkeeper in the 1840s. The original building the Globe Tavern was removed and

replaced by the current Globe Inn during 1898-1901 when it was acquired by the Brewers Fredrick Smith from Aston who had 11 other pubs in Tamworth!



Author at the Globe © Peter Allum

Richard lived nearby in Little Church Lane close enough to walk to work. Earlier in life he'd been involved in roadwork and brick making which were common trades during England's early industrial years. An engineering related career and coincidentally in line with my own engineering background.

Richard was born in Marlow, Buckinghamshire into a family already connected to brick making. He married Susannah Burch in 1815 at St Martin in the Fields Church, London. They later moved to Gillingham, Kent, probably for work in the brick industry. Their son John Allum, the same one who would later sail to Australia, was baptised on 23 January 1822 at St Mary Magdalene Church in Gillingham.

Susannah disappears from the records soon after, suggesting she may have died young perhaps? By 1827 Richard had remarried. This time to Hannah Stirrup at St Editha's Church in Tamworth UK. They went on to have several children and Richard lived until 1863 reaching the age of eighty. Quite a good lifespan for the time.

### Linking the Two Tamworth's

Working from my small farm in country New South Wales I came across the Tamworth (UK) [Genealogy Group](#) online and sent them an enquiry. That's how I met Jill Gadsby, who became a great help in confirming and expanding my research.

Jill and her colleague Chris from the [Tamworth Heritage Magazine](#) were generous with their knowledge and time. When I later travelled to England, I was able to meet them in person fittingly at the Globe Inn where my ancestor Richard had once been the landlord. Sitting in that pub with people who knew so much about the area's history was a special experience.

Jill also offered a possible explanation for why John Allum and his family might have migrated. She mentioned the de Hamel family who lived near the Allums in Bolebridge Street.

The de Hamels were early settlers in Sydney and there may have been a connection that helped or encouraged John and Elizabeth to start a new life there. It's a lead I plan to explore further through Sydney's early colonial records.



### Visiting the Old Country

When I told friends back home that I was *going to Tamworth on holiday* I was met with a few puzzled looks. Once I explained that it was the other Tamworth, the one in England, it made a bit more sense.

Visiting Tamworth UK, along with Marlow and Gillingham gave me a clearer sense of where my family came from. Walking the streets where they lived and seeing the same churches where they were married and baptised made the past feel very real.

When locals asked where I was from and I said "Tamworth". I got the same confused reaction I received in Australia followed by another long explanation, only in reverse this time.

### Staying at the Globe Inn

A highlight of the trip was staying at the Globe Inn, now a comfortable hotel and pub run by Claire and her team. Knowing that my great-great-great-grandfather once worked there added another layer of meaning to the visit. The



Jill with John and Ruth Allum  
© Tamworth Digital archive

staff were welcoming and sitting in a building with such a personal link to my family's story was something I'll remember for a long time. Nearby I visited Little Church Lane where Richard Allum had lived. The house still stands, and it now operates as a burger restaurant. Being in the same structure where my ancestors lived almost two centuries ago gave me a small window into their daily lives. Just down the lane, St Editha's Church remains as impressive as ever. Its churchyard holding generations of Tamworth residents including a few of my own relatives.

### Looking Back

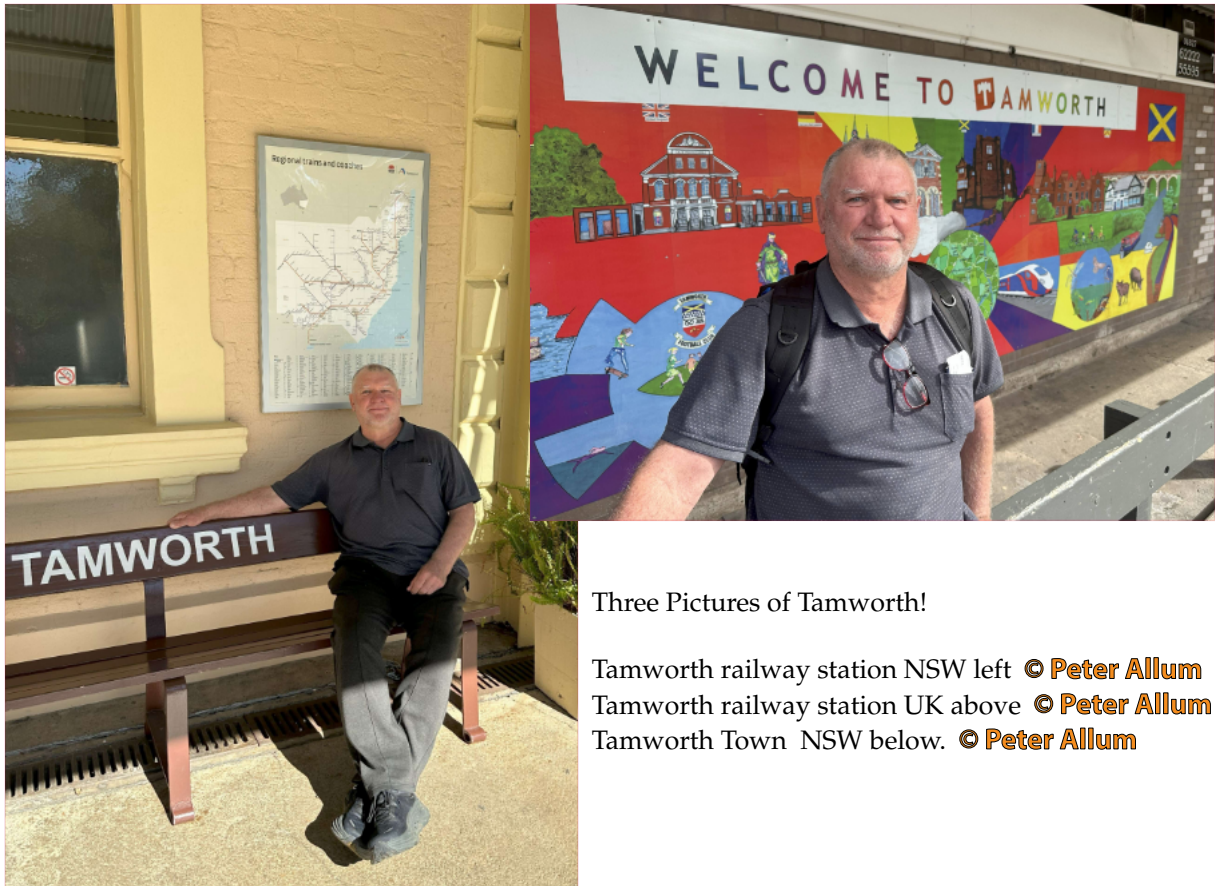
Tracing my family history from one Tamworth to another has been both educational and personally rewarding. It started as a hobby but quickly became a way to connect with the people and choices that shaped where I am today.

It's easy to think of history as distant or impersonal but learning about ordinary people like grocers, innkeepers and brick makers makes

it come alive. For John and Elizabeth Allum, leaving England in 1853 must have been a major step into the unknown. Their decision set the course for the generations that followed.

As for me living in another town called Tamworth nearly two centuries later it's hard not to feel that the story has come full circle. Whether coincidence or fate the link between the two Tamworth's reminds me how easily the past can echo into the present.

*Editor: This story has also triggered some more research as some photos at the Globe Inn are incorrectly attributed. So we are hunting down records of landlords and photographs of what was on the site pre 1900. If anyone has any information, photos or documents appertaining to the Globe Tavern or the Townshend's Arms that predated it your Editor would love see them. Email [Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk](mailto:Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk)*



Three Pictures of Tamworth!

- Tamworth railway station NSW left © Peter Allum
- Tamworth railway station UK above © Peter Allum
- Tamworth Town NSW below. © Peter Allum



## 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, most will have seen this door, but where?



Last Issues Doorway:  
The stairs leading to the Terrace bar (and it does indeed get better)

Photo © Jameia

# The tale of a Presentation Watch and a Legacy

by Roger Bragger



Watch presented to Warrington Giddins  
© Tamworth Digital archive

In the last edition of the 'Tamworth Heritage Magazine, [Vol 3 Issue 4](#) a request was made for anyone who had any information on a *Harrington Giddins*, I do not believe any one came forward with any information. This is understandable as the name of the person was not *Harrington* but *Warrington*.

I have now uncovered the history of the man and the watch... He was Christened *Warrington* after his paternal grandmother, Sarah Warrington 1791-1872, she married James Giddins 1791-1857 in about 1815. One of their



The confusion continued because the monogram on the case was read as "CW" and thought to be the makers mark, rather than "GW" or "WG" the name of the recipient Warrington Giddins. Also we all saw the "W" on the inscription inside as a stylised "H" because that is what we all wanted to see, because someone had said *Harrington*, which was used as a first name whereas Warrington is far less common. Let this be a lesson to all doing research:

Try to find evidence to break what you believe, as much as to confirm it. Confirmation bias is a dangerous thing in historical research.

children was named Warrington Giddins 1856-1915. This is the person to whom Lady Emily Peel 1836-1924 presented the gold watch to, for loyal service between 1878 and 1898.

### The Trail from H to W

I did a talk to the Coton Ladies Club earlier in the year and was given £50 for the talk which I gave to The Peel Society. When I came to give it to our treasurer, I could not find the cheque. I went through my file but could not find it, however it turned up in another file so I could now present it to our treasurer. Whilst searching for the envelope with the money in, I noticed a wad of papers from a law firm in the U.S.A., this was for a donation to 'The Peel Society' for \$25,000! The person donating it was a Mary Giddins 1929-2023. Using my 'deductive powers' I realised there must be a connection between, who I thought was Harrington Giddins and this lady, but what was the connection between the two?

I believe that Warrington who was from Hemingford Abbots, Huntingdonshire, went to Drayton Manor sometime about 1875. He is described as a landscape gardener; this is where he met up with Lady Emily Peel.

Emily had a house at 46 Kleber Avenue, Geneva, Switzerland, I knew this because in the Peel museum there is an 'album' that I describe as a 'Victorian iPad', you did not realise that they had iPads in Victorian times, of course not! What it is, is an album that Evelyn Peel one of the daughters of Robert Peel 3rd Baronet and Emily, used to take with her when she went on weekend 'shoots' to the various estates and stately homes that she went to. It contains notes, photos, comments, tallies of game shot on shooting weekends and the like. [We will have an article on this "Victorian iPad" in a future issue. Editor]

When the Peel society purchased it some years ago, I copied it to display alongside the original and I remembered that there were several references in the album to a house in Geneva.

It is of note that Gwendoline Peel, Evelyn's sister, married Victor von Muller on 6 October 1896 at Holy Trinity Church, Geneva so they would

probably have had the reception at the house after the wedding. However, this made me think 'outside the box', so I looked up the Swiss records for any reference to *Harrington* Giddins, yes there were! However, the records showed a *Warrington* Giddins not *Harrington*, I at first thought that they had the name recorded incorrectly, but what if they were correct and I was wrong.

Looking at the engravings on the watch I realised that I was wrong and it was a W not a H as I first thought. I suppose the large engraving on the front case W G was a clue that I was wrong, see the engravings yourself to see how easy it was for me to make that mistake. I believe that Warrington Giddins was asked to go to Geneva to act as her house keeper, hence the award of the watch for 20 years of faithful and loyal service, that is why the watch was awarded.

So, the question is how did the lady named Mary Giddins a citizen of America come to leave the \$25,000? Here, I believe is the answer: Whilst living in Switzerland Warrington married a Swiss lady, Caroline Steiner 1856-1915, who described herself as a 'Ladies Maid'. They had a child Charles Alpha Giddins 1886-1964 who married Helen Gilland 1890-1967. They emigrated to America in July 1913 where they lived in the New York area and a girl was born to them, Mary Margaret Giddins 1929-2023, the lady that left the money to 'The Peel Society'.

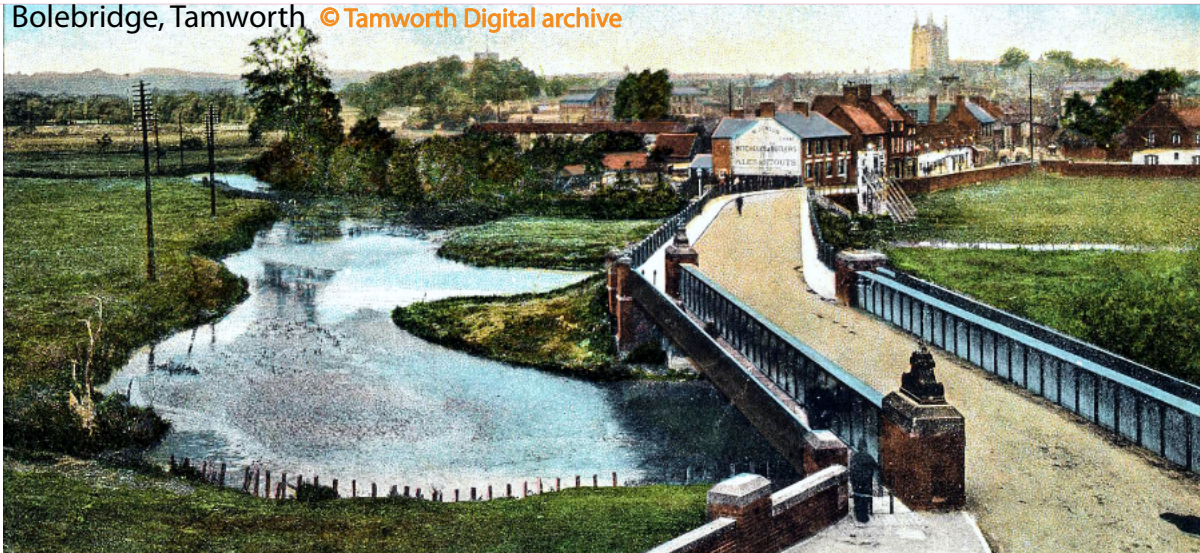
I can only imagine that Mary had been told of the kindness of Lady Peel towards her grandfather and as she never married, when she died, she left all of her money to various charities including our

society. So, we have the kindness of Lady Peel to thank for the legacy that The Peel Society benefited from.

I believe you will agree with me, that this was a remarkable series of coincidences that pieced this interesting story together. The thing is the Peel Society actually have no idea when or how they acquired the watch in the first place. That mystery is yet to be solved.

Mary Margaret Giddins was buried at sea privately, in February 2023.





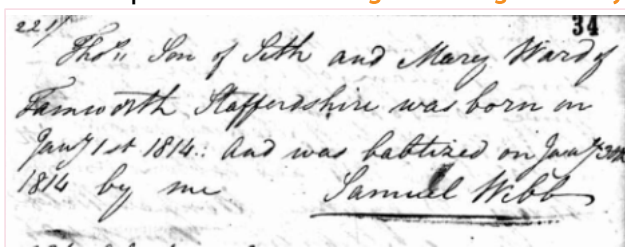
## An Ordinary Tamworth Man: The Quiet Influence of Thomas Brown Ward by Prof. Byran Korth , Jackelyn Pruitt and Pat Esplin

Historians often turn their attention to the lives of prominent figures and major events, overlooking the quieter individuals whose convictions and compassion helped shape the world around them. Yet within the lives of such people lies a silent power, revealed through steady faith, integrity, and kindness. These qualities transformed the lives of those around them and left enduring marks on history. One such individual was Thomas Brown Ward of Tamworth, Staffordshire.

### A Tamworth Family in Changing Times

Thomas was born on 1 January 1814 in the small but growing market town of Tamworth to Seth Ward and Mary Brown. His father, originally from Repton, Derbyshire, had moved to Tamworth after completing his apprenticeship as a cooper and married Mary on 2 September 1806. By the time Thomas was born, England's religious landscape was changing rapidly.

### TBW Baptism Record © Brigham Young University



As the eighteenth century drew to a close, England had endured years of upheaval in the wake of the French Revolution and the lengthy wars that followed. The early nineteenth century brought deep questions about faith, authority, and freedom.

The Toleration Act of 1812 eased restrictions on Nonconformist faiths, allowing many to preach and worship more freely. Later, in 1828, Parliament repealed the long-standing Test and Corporation Acts, removing the legal barriers that had prevented Nonconformists and Dissenters from holding public office.

Nonconformist denominations were on the rise. Methodism, in particular, flourished in industrial regions like Staffordshire. Within households such as the Wards', national reforms altered daily rhythms of worship and community life.

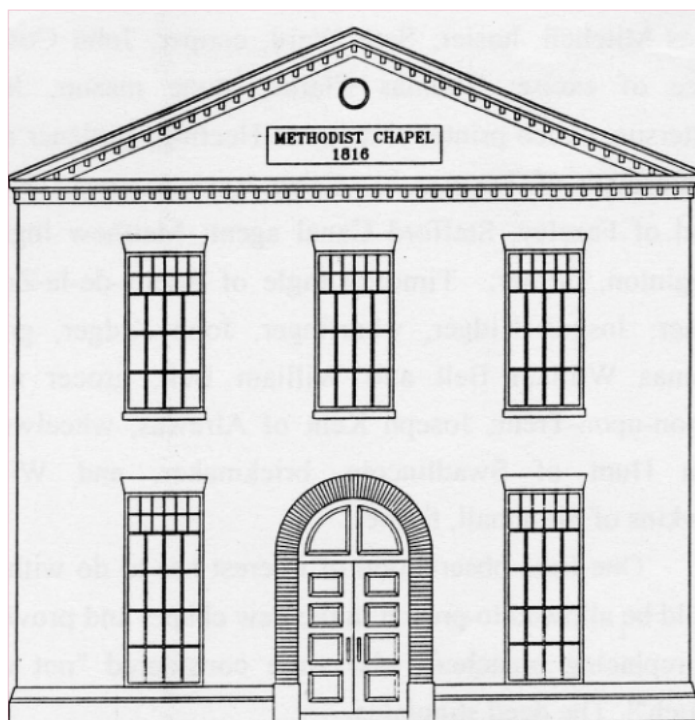
Beyond individual homes, towns like Tamworth and nearby Burton-upon-Trent experienced the effects of these reforms, as renewed energy reshaped both civic and religious life. Chapels flourished, and working people were encouraged to read, debate, and think for themselves. Thomas's parents were members of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, one of several growing branches of Methodism that appealed to the industrious families of the

Midlands. Their son Seth was baptised at the Wesleyan Chapel on Bolebridge Street in 1808, and Thomas at the Horninglow Street Chapel in Burton in 1814. Seth and Mary remained in Tamworth throughout their lives.

The story of this ordinary Tamworth man reveals how broader movements of faith, reform, and opportunity impacted the lives of everyday people, giving them the means to shape their communities and, in subtle yet lasting ways, influence the wider world.

### Work, Marriage, and Religious Search

At some point in his youth, Thomas apprenticed as a cabinet-maker, a skilled trade that flourished in the industrial Midlands. His craftsmanship likely brought him to Birmingham, where he married Charlotte Tomkin in 1839. Two children followed — Seth George Ward (born 20 March 1840) and Mary Ward



Architect's impression of the Bolebridge Street Chapel as it appeared in 1816

BAPTISMS solemnized in the Parish of <i>Tamworth</i> in the County of <i>Stafford</i> in the Year 1842						
When Baptized.	Child's Christian Name.	Parents Name.		Abode.	Quality, Trade, or Profession.	By whom the Ceremony was performed.
		Christian.	Surname.			
1842 Oct 2 Born 28th Oct. No. 769.	<i>Leoline</i> <i>Matilda</i> Son of <i>Sarah</i>	<i>John</i> <i>Mayne</i> & <i>Sarah</i>	<i>Horsbion</i>	<i>Whitwell</i>	<i>Wine Merchant</i>	<i>M. Webb</i>
Oct 6 Born 31st Oct. No. 770.	<i>Abraham</i> <i>Benj</i> Son of <i>Ann</i>	<i>Thomas</i> & <i>Ann</i>	<i>Swain</i>	<i>Tamworth</i>	<i>Labourer</i>	<i>M. Webb</i>
Oct 9 Born 25. No. 771.	<i>Leah</i> <i>Ann</i> Daughter of <i>Camilla</i>	<i>Samuel</i> & <i>Sarah</i>	<i>Taich</i>	<i>Tamworth</i>	<i>Widow</i>	<i>A. Webb</i>
Oct 9 Born 29th Oct. No. 772.	<i>Arthur</i> <i>Benj</i> Son of <i>Sarah</i>	<i>Samuel</i> & <i>Sarah</i>	<i>Carters</i>	<i>Whitwell</i>	<i>Widow</i>	<i>A. Webb</i>
Oct 9 Born 31st Oct. No. 773.	<i>Emma</i> <i>Benj</i> Daughter of <i>Mary</i>	<i>William</i> & <i>Mary</i>	<i>Chapman</i>	<i>Tamworth</i>	<i>Labourer</i>	<i>A. Webb</i>
Oct 9 Born 1st Nov. No. 774.	<i>Elizabeth</i> <i>Benj</i> Daughter of <i>Ann</i>	<i>George</i> & <i>Ann</i>	<i>Davis</i>	<i>Whitwell</i>	<i>Labourer</i>	<i>A. Webb</i>
Oct 9 Born 7th Nov. No. 775.	<i>Mary</i> <i>Benj</i> Daughter of <i>Charlotte</i>	<i>Thomas</i> <i>Ward</i> & <i>Charlotte</i>	<i>Ward</i>	<i>Birmingham</i>	<i>Cabinet Maker</i>	<i>A. Webb</i>
Oct 9 Born 14th Nov. No. 776.	<i>Seth</i> <i>Benj</i> Son of <i>Charlotte</i>	<i>Thomas</i> <i>Ward</i> & <i>Charlotte</i>	<i>Ward</i>	<i>Birmingham</i>	<i>Cabinet Maker</i>	<i>A. Webb</i>

(born 7 March 1841). Both were baptised in the parish of Tamworth, likely so their births could be officially registered, linking the family to their Staffordshire roots even while they lived and worked in Birmingham.

During this period, religious restlessness was spreading among working-class Methodists. Many felt estranged from the growing bureaucracy of the Wesleyan hierarchy and sought a more personal experience of faith.

Thomas shared this dissatisfaction. Influenced by local Congregationalist teaching, he began attending Carr's Lane Chapel, where the well-known preacher John Angell James drew large crowds. For a time, Thomas worshipped there, but eventually he came to view the congregation as full of hypocrisy and felt that he had not yet found what he was searching for.

It was at this time, in about 1841, that Thomas was introduced to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

## A New Faith

Around 1841, Thomas encountered missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a newly established Christian movement that originated in upstate New York in 1830, which taught that it had restored the *primitive* church of the New Testament.

Early missionaries arrived in Preston in 1837, sharing their message across the industrial Midlands where many, including Thomas, proved eager listeners.

*[It should be noted that around this time the Methodists in Tamworth were also "Primitive Methodists" Editor ]*

Thomas ultimately joined the new faith. His curiosity turned to conviction, and before long, he became one of the early converts authorised to share the message in England.

Within a few years of his baptism into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, he had moved to Burton-upon-Trent to work as a cabinet-maker for Charles Rowland in 1844.

Alongside his trade, he served as scribe and clerk for local church meetings and occasionally spoke at community gatherings such as the Mutual Improvement Society, a popular venue where working men met to discuss literature, philosophy, and religion. It was here that his quiet influence would help shape another life and, in time, inspire the learning of countless others.

## The Young Apprentice: John Jaques

In 1843, a thoughtful fifteen-year-old named John Jaques began his apprenticeship under the same master. Born in Market Bosworth, Leicestershire, he had attended the town's Free Grammar School, earning a reputation for diligence and thoroughness in his studies.

During his apprenticeship, Jaques developed a growing interest in religion, regularly attending the local Baptist chapel and participating in the Mutual Improvement Society.

A thoughtful and devout youth, he devoted much of his spare time to reading works such as John Angell James's *The Anxious Inquirer After Salvation* and other religious writings in his search for truth.

It was at a meeting of the local Mutual Improvement Society that he first heard Thomas Brown Ward deliver a lecture on "Faith." Jaques later recalled that Thomas "seemed to have good spiritual reason for the faith that was in him and the doctrines he taught." The two men became close friends, with Thomas guiding the younger man in both trade and belief.

In the autumn of 1845, Thomas Brown Ward baptised eighteen-year-old John Jaques in a pond near Gresley Coppice Side, close to Swadlincote in Derbyshire. For Jaques, the event marked the culmination of years of spiritual searching, and for Thomas, it was an expression of conviction and friendship. Their bond would endure for years, united by faith and a shared hunger for truth.

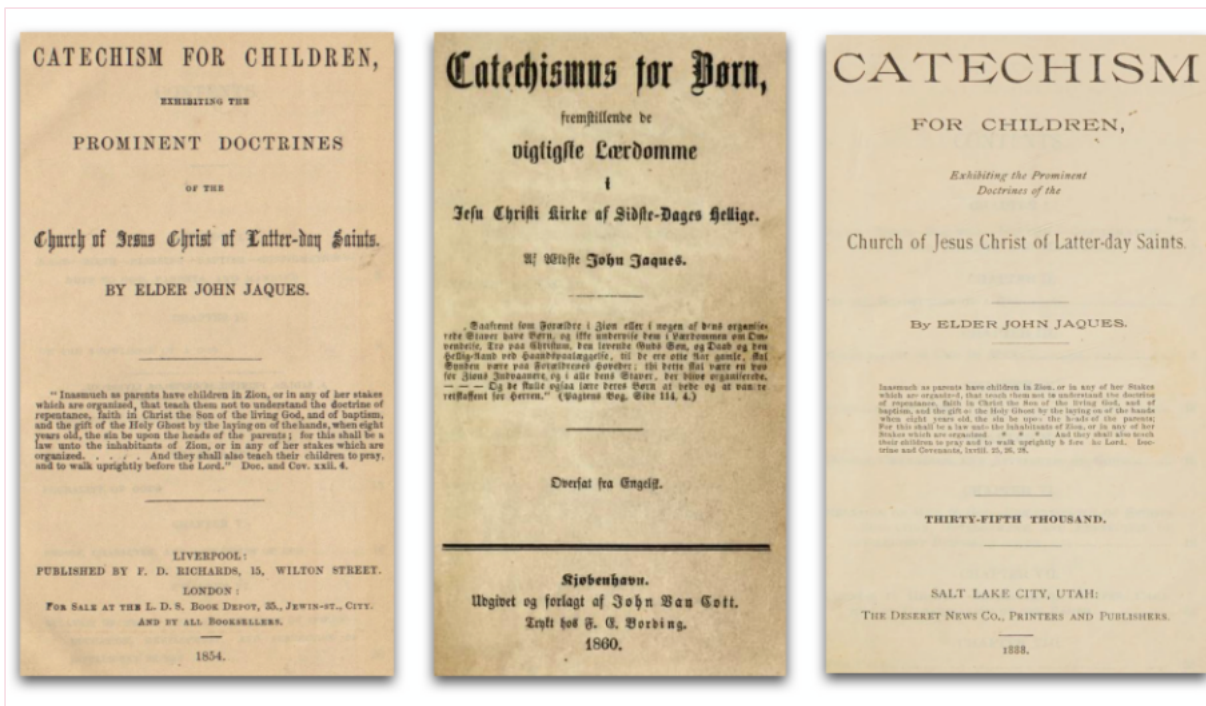
## From Tamworth to the World: The Influence of Jaques

Jaques's conversion created tension at home, and he came to rely even more on Thomas for guidance. In time, he was ordained an elder and began preaching, following the example set by his mentor. During his time preaching, Jaques became a skillful writer.

His talents for writing soon found wider expression. Jaques's poetry, hymns, and essays appeared in the *Millennial Star*, the Church's official publication for its European members. It served as a vital communication tool for the church in Britain and became a key source of news, doctrine, and correspondence for Latter-day Saints on both sides of the Atlantic. In 1852, he became the paper's assistant editor, which was based in Liverpool.

Perhaps his greatest contribution came in 1854 with the publication of *A Catechism for Children*, a question-and-answer guide to the Church's basic doctrines. First serialised in the *Millennial Star*, it was later printed as a small book for use in families and schools. Its popularity was extraordinary: by 1888, it had reached its tenth printing, with over 35,000 copies sold and translations into Danish, Dutch, German, Swedish, Hawaiian, and Samoan.

Considering the Church's membership at the time, that amounted to nearly *one copy for every five members*, roughly equivalent to selling almost three million copies today. Its impact cannot be overstated in influencing the learning and instruction of children and youth, both in the



home and in the The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Scholars have since noted that it helped standardise the Church's early theology — a remarkable legacy for a former apprentice from Market Bosworth.

None of this, however, would have occurred without the early influence of his Tamworth friend and mentor, Thomas Brown Ward.

### The Final Years of Thomas Brown Ward

By the early 1850s, Thomas's employment with Charles Rowland had ended. Through family connections, he found work as a cabinet-maker in Uttoxeter, but his health soon declined.

He died in January 1852, aged just forty, and was buried in St Modwen's Cemetery, Burton-upon-Trent. Deeply moved, John Jaques honoured his friend in verse, a heartfelt tribute to the man whose faith and friendship had shaped his life.

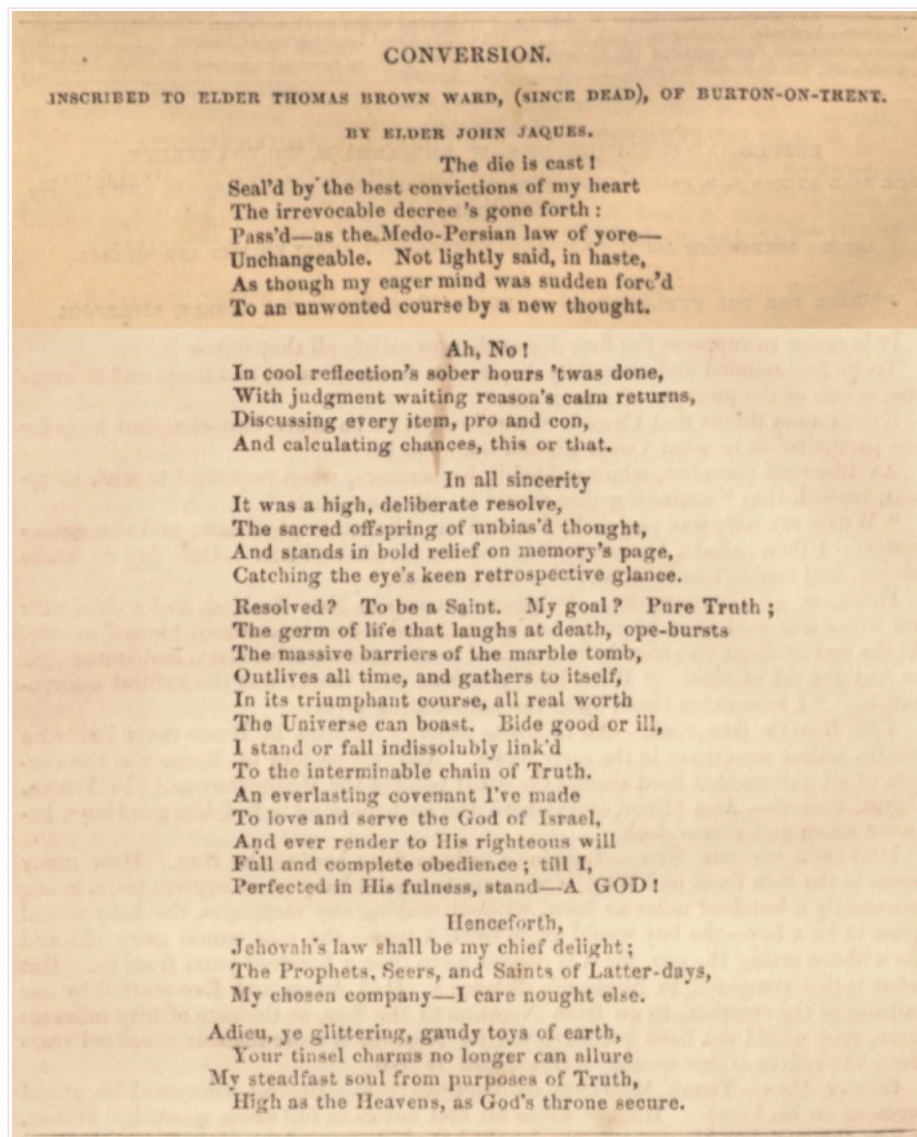
Eventually, in 1856, John Jaques would join the thousands of British converts who immigrated to Salt Lake City in the second half of the nineteenth century. He would serve as assistant church historian until his death on 1 June 1900. Though Thomas's name faded from public record, his influence endured through Jaques's writings, hymns, and teaching materials, which spread to homes and chapels across Britain and beyond.

### Legacy of a Tamworth Cabinet-Maker

The story of Thomas Brown Ward reminds us that history is not only shaped by prominent people, but also by ordinary tradesmen, teachers, and neighbours whose quiet convictions ripple outward through generations.

In Thomas' lifetime, Tamworth was a town in transition, with its industries expanding, its chapels filling, and its people hungry for

Superintendent Registrar's District <i>Burton upon Trent</i>									
Registrar's District <i>Burton upon Trent</i>									
1852. DEATHS in the District of <i>Burton upon Trent</i> in the County of <i>Stafford and Derby</i>									
No.	When Died.	Name and Surname.	Sex.	Age.	Rank or Profession.	Cause of Death.	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant.	When Registered.	Signature of Registrar.
<i>1442</i>	<i>January 1852</i>	<i>Thomas Brown Ward</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>37 years</i>	<i>Joiner and cabinet-maker</i>	<i>Acute Rheumatism 16 days</i>	<i>Ann Hathaway present at Haslwall Street St. Burton Pntn</i>	<i>18th January 1852</i>	<i>John Willmory Registrar</i>



meaning and improvement. In this setting, one cabinet-maker's open-mindedness and mentorship helped inspire a movement of learning and faith that extended far beyond the Midlands.

From the workshop floors of Tamworth to classrooms in distant lands, the legacy of Thomas Brown Ward endures as a testament to the power of belief, education, and the lasting influence of an ordinary man's example.

#### End-notes

Note: This article draws on church records, family archives, and nineteenth-century publications.

1. Parish and baptismal records, Tamworth and Burton-upon-Trent.
2. David Hempton, Methodism and

Politics in British Society (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984).

3. Hugh McLeod, Religion and the Working Class in Nineteenth-Century Britain (London: Macmillan, 1984).

4. Stella Jaques Bell, Life History and Writings of John Jaques, Including a Diary of the Martin Handcart Company (Rexburg, Idaho: Ricks College Press, 1978)

5. John Jaques, "Autobiographical Sketch," The Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine (July 1910).

6. Kenneth L. Alford, "A History of Mormon Catechisms," in A Firm Foundation: Church Organization and Administration, ed. David J. Whittaker and Arnold K. Garr (Provo, UT: [Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University](http://ReligiousStudiesCenter.BrighamYoungUniversity.edu); Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2011), 223-44.

For more information contact Byran Korth at [bkorth@byu.edu](mailto:bkorth@byu.edu)

## Book Review

### The Families that shaped Tamworth

Mark Prime

Published

ISBN 978-0-300-18771-7

Softcover 159 pages

12.5cm by 23.5cm

**This book is about the everyday people who lived in Tamworth over the centuries and follows the family history of some of these.**

For those who prefer to find out about ordinary people rather than Kings and Queens, politicians or battles this will be an interesting read; 'These are the lives that built Tamworth - not with fanfare but with continuity'.

As the author says in his introduction ' Every chapter in this book moves through a new layer of time'. Chapter One (1284-1584) begins with information from the medieval manorial court rolls which contain details of disputes, including breaking of by-laws, disagreements over land and property ownership, or fines for offences such as cutting down timber beyond the lord's boundary, selling ale without a licence, letting pigs or oxen trample on a neighbour's field and failing to repair fences. The same family names appear across the generations, sometimes as those who worked the land, sometimes as tradesmen, and then as jurors, constables and clerks.

A variety of occupations are mentioned; brewing, baking, dyeing cloth, shoe-making, and more. During this time Tamworth became a thriving market town, trading the goods that were produced. The author explains how many of the family names developed and also some of the road names that still exist today, such as Church Street, Market Street and Hospital Street.

Chapter Two tells the story of Tamworth Castle under the Ferrers family (1423 -1681) and explains that they made Tamworth their home and had an influence on how the town developed over these centuries. Their alterations



made the castle a comfortable home. Records show how they employed local people and managed tenancy rights. It is interesting to read that places that are now streets, such as Victoria Road and Kettlebrook, were once pasture. The last of the Ferrers family became an MP and spent most of his time away from Tamworth, leasing land to local families and handing governance of the town to the new town council, run by educated tradesmen.

Chapter Three (800s to 1100s) for some reason not explained goes back in time to the Mercians. It relates how Aethelflaed ruled as Lady of the Mercians, and then our area was taken over by Wessex. Then came the Normans and various families who lived in Tamworth in those times are recorded in church records. The author explains how the names of some families from this time are found in local street names, such as Coton Lane, while some names appear in the records of other nearby Staffordshire towns. I would disagree that Hopwas and Shenstone are, as stated, in northern Staffordshire however.

Chapter Four goes back to the Tudor era (1485 – 1603) and describes the trades of the town and the families that carried them out; tailors, coopers, brewers, textile workers, blacksmiths and many more.

It is followed by a chapter which follows the Grindlay family who kept many council records in the 17th to 19th centuries and then a chapter which looks at how the English Civil War and plague affected the families of the town, and the beginnings of the industrial revolution. Later chapters look at stories from the archives of the Tamworth Herald, particularly how the First and Second World Wars affected the people of the town.

The final chapter states that it brings the story of Tamworth up to the present. However this may have been written some time ago (the book isn't dated) as it says that Griffin's hardware store still stands (it has been closed for some years). There is no mention of the expansion of the town such as the over-spill from Birmingham. Has the author even visited the town recently?

It also mentions a bakery in Church Lane and a bookshop on Colehill which doesn't appear to exist or ever have existed? Some of the references here are to Tamworth in Australia! On reading it this reviewer was surprised to read road names that were unrecognisable but on following the links on P. 151 it would appear that the author has googled Tamworth and given information about the Australian town of Tamworth, such as the Country Music Festival! The writer has put a lot of work into this book and much of it is fascinating to anyone with an interest in the town. The illustrations are appealing, well presented in water colour although with a little artistic licence about the locations and with no captions or attribution to the artist.

However this reviewer found the text to be at times trite, even corny – there are many such examples on every page such as the following: 'So yes, the town was changing. But its core remained: Names that meant something. Work that meant everything. And a road forward that always, always started from home'. This meant that it was preferable to just skip through such banal comments in order to read the factual parts.

Copyrighted Material

As a local historian rooted in Tamworth, I've spent years delving into the lives and legacies of the families who built this town. From the shadow of Tamworth Castle to the stories etched in our streets, my work aims to bring these narratives to light. Families That Shaped Tamworth is a tribute to the generations whose everyday lives wove the fabric of our community. Through this book, I hope to honor their contributions and preserve their stories for future generations.  
— Mark Prime

**Families That Shaped Tamworth**  
Tamworth's story isn't just told through castles and kings — it lives in the names carved into pub benches, the trades passed down through generations, and the quiet strength of everyday families. Families That Shaped Tamworth dives deep into the town's working-class roots, uncovering the people who built it brick by brick, shop by shop, street by street. With tales of resilience, rebellion, and local character, this book captures the spirit of a town that's seen it all — from ancient battles to coal dust and council estates. Whether you've lived here your whole life or just love local history with heart, this book is a tribute to the real Tamworth — the one you won't find in tourist leaflets. Open these pages, and you might just find your own family woven into its story.

ISBN 978284321267  
9 796284 321267 90000

Copyrighted Material

There are some errors throughout the text in addition to much of chapter 10; some of the street names are unfamiliar to this reviewer (despite living in Tamworth for 46 years!). This led to doubts about the historical accuracy of some of the other information in the book, and there are no sources listed in order to corroborate it.

Although the early chapters were interesting the tone of the writing and the inaccuracies prevented this reviewer from really enjoying this book or wishing to read it again.

This book is [part of a series the Author has done](#) including:

Threads, The Burntwood and Lichfield Chronicles

Families that shaped Burntwood

The Families that shaped Cannock

The Rugeley Chronicles

# Volunteers wanted: THM needs you!



## Volunteers wanted: THM needs you!

**Tamworth Heritage Magazine has many on going projects. Our only problem is time. We could cut corners as others have done but the team wants do to things properly. This involves research, cross checking and often chasing red herrings down rabbit holes!**

We are looking for volunteers to help with the video team, the [digital] archive team, web team, general research, photography, web team, magazine, book and cover design. Despite most of our work being on-line, sometimes actually going to look at something in the wild outdoors is essential. 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 60s. Basic 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, 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 Editor.

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

Contact [Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk](mailto:Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk)

**Come and Join the Team!**



# Letters to the Editor



The Bakery's delivery cart  
© Verne Shelton

## Dear Editor

My grandfather Horace Shelton fought in the Tank Corps during the first war. His brothers ran the bakery in Wilnecote, originally started by my great grandfather Henry in 1880. Henry was also responsible for building Shelton street in Wilnecote

Horace suffered with his health on returning from the war after being gassed. He continued to work in the family business until his retirement. William Shelton the eldest brother was the first to run the family bakery. Horace's older brothers ran the bakery during the war.

My father Peter Shelton continued the bakery at Wilnecote until it was purchased by the council to build the health centre. I have tried to find more information about Horace's war service but records are scarce.

Horace was originally in the Machine Gun Corps. I believe he was gassed during the early campaign of the Tank Corps. He joined the army at the beginning of the war as work was very short as the family brothers all worked in the bakery.





The Bakery's delivery cart at the Toll House © Verne Shelton

This is the old toll house which was at the bottom of Shelton Street on the Watling Street. It was owned by Henry Shelton until he sold to the council to enable road widening. When Henry died in 1932 he still owned approximately half of the houses in Shelton Street.

Regards  
Verne

*Editor: Horace was one of the very first in history to be in a tank. Initially, a member of the Heavy Machine Gun Company (formed March 1916) from the Machine Gun Corps (formed October 1915) The Heavy Section were trained on the very new, tanks.*

*Joining the Army meant pay and three meals a day of better food than most would get at home, which is why many men joined initially. As you were only in the front line about ¼ of the time the odds might have been better than working in some factories, until you went over the top.*

*Shelton Street was largely built and owned by the Shelton family. If anyone has any images of Shelton Street or the area before the changes please contact the [Editor](#)*

*Below is Horace Shelton's silver medal commissioned by the people of Wilnecote.*

*They did not become the Tank Corps until the following year in July 1917. So the first tanks, in which Horace Shelton went into action with in September 1916, were as the Machine Gun Corps.*

*It should be noted that Horace joined because "work was very short" in Tamworth at the time.*





**Dear Editor**

People have asked who introduced Dr Watson to Sherlock Holmes. I have discovered that the person has a connection to Mercia indeed they are a Mercian. This was clear to those who know and watched Series 1 Episode 1  
Regards Martha Hudson

**Editor :** *Who introduced Dr Watson to Sherlock Holmes? This four minute clip [click here or on image above](#) from the modern (2010-2017) BBC Sherlock series, shows where Mike Stamford introduced Dr Watson to Sherlock Holmes.*

*What has this to do with Tamworth you might ask? Well in the original Sherlock Holmes books from 1886, Watson had been in Afghanistan as a surgeon in the Royal Army Medical Corps attached to a regiment. The regiment isn't mentioned by Conan Doyle in the books and many have guessed at various regiments, all long gone. The BBC version (2010), Sherlock, is set in the 2000s when the British Army was once again in Afghanistan (2001-2021) with the Mercian's serving 2007 to 2009. Those who served will recognised that John Watson's friend, Mike Stamford, who introduces him to Sherlock, is wearing a Mercian Regimental tie. It is unclear if Stamford is Royal Army Medical Corps attached to, or originally, a Mercian as he mentions still being at Bart's (St Bartholomew's Hospital, London) where he is teaching. Either way The Mercian's can claim to have been instrumental in creating the greatest Consulting Detective Team the world has ever seen. Its elementary.*

**Dear Editor**

I found the Heritage Magazine very interesting and I should be delighted to received copies and please do send me the pdf of the book "Forgotten History of Wigginton Village" when it is ready.

Re writing an article, I enjoy writing but don't have much to contribute. All I know about Wigginton is what I have found out from the family tree I had a go at :

A John Silvester (b 1765 and his daughter. Lucy Wallis b 1801) lived in Wigginton. I don't know if they are related to my father's family- Wallis, who lived in Wigginton later:

His father was James Wallis, born in Wigginton 1833.

James' children were Henry Wallis 1849, Francis Wallis 1852 -1918 b/ Comberford Jane Wallis 1959 b Wigginton, James Wallis b. 1864, (my grandfather)

James Wallis b. 1904 d. Gt. Yarmouth 1984.

All that my father said about the family was that two of the sons left at an early age to work on the railway in Swindon, because there was little money from the small holding to support the family. (I assume Wigginton was part of the Enclosure movement.) Later they moved to Wolverhampton and joined the police force.

One thing that intrigues me was that my father said there had been a girl. Might this be the Jane

Wallis above? But he said the lady he called Aunt Nell, and who occasionally visited her brother James' family - took him, as a boy, to Wolverhampton Music Hall and that for most of her life she was a lady's maid in a big house in Wigginton. She was taken by the family to France each Summer. I wonder where this house might have been. I am not asking you to make much sense of this but just wanted to tell you what I know and how little that is, but I still find the name Wigginton intriguing! And who was Aunt Nell? When I visited Wigginton , very briefly, about 10 years ago , on a lecture visit to Birmingham, I wrote some of this to the Tamworth newspaper and an elderly man said that when he was a boy he used to see an elderly lady called Miss Wallis, walking her little dog... Was this Aunt Nell??  
 Very best wishes .  
 Hilary

*Editor: Thank you for the kind words about the magazine but we are only as good as our contributors! We will be letting everyone know when we have finished the PDF (downloadable) version of the "Forgotten History of Wigginton Village". It will, like the magazine, be free. We had to wait until the authors had sold the 150 printed versions before we started. There will be no more printed copies.*

*Everyone says they "don't have much to contribute" but we have found that it is the little pieces that connect things together. The one vital piece of information someone needs to unlock the path forward. I note you say the sons left to work in Swindon, and parts of your family ended up in Great Yarmouth. This sort of thing crops up often and I have come to realise that far from common perception, a lot of the population often travelled across the country for work, family etc. Dispelling the myth that people didn't stray more than 10 miles from where they were born.*



*As for odd bits of information if anyone has any information (or photos) about Aunt Nell or Miss Wallis and her dog please email the Editor and we can pass it on to Hilary.*

*The Following Letter came in via our resident Genealogist  
 (see <https://www.tamworthgenealogy.org.uk/>)*

**Dear Genealogist**

Well this is a lovely surprise – thank you so much for remembering me and my interest in the Sydenham family. I'd known that Will (as he was known to differentiate him from his father, William) had been a volunteer in the army, but we didn't know he'd been to the Boer War. So I have a little more to add to his notes and a great image of him looking very young in his army uniform.

I'm really enjoying reading all of the magazine too, and the previous issue which the Boer War article links to. It's a great production.

We were in England in May this year and paid a quick visit to Bolehall House and even got a peek inside the hallway as we met a resident who was going in. She took my photocopy image of the





Bolehall House © Sandra Simpson

house with all the people sitting in front of it, including William Sydenham, and pinned it on their notice board.

William Sydenham is sitting on the ground in the centre, in his shirtsleeves. He and his wife held an annual party for the elderly of the parish, which I think this must be.

I hadn't appreciated from recent photos just how little ground is left around the house, all of William's big garden is gone. Intriguingly low-key entry to the site, we knew it was under a viaduct so just followed our noses when we thought we were in the right place. I also include one of my husband (left) that I took in May this year. The exterior of the house has changed hardly at all.

Keith Frentz is the great-grandson of William and Fanny Sydenham (grandson of their daughter Emmeline). The entire family ended up emigrating to New Zealand, but came back in dribs and drabs. Young Will was first, followed by Emmeline, who came as his housekeeper (until she married a neighbour!), then Tom, the youngest sibling, came after WW1 (he was in the RAF), followed by his mother, and, finally, old William and his daughter Mary.

I believe young Will had considered going to South America to farm as he had several Keen

Bolehall House May 2025 © Sandra Simpson



relations established there (Argentina and Uruguay), uncles and cousins. The Keen family farmed for many years in the Coleshill area.

We were on limited time, but over 2 days were able to visit several family sites connected to my husband's Sydenham and Keen families – Tamworth, Water Orton, Lichfield, Coleshill and Chelmsley Wood. Thank goodness for SatNav.

We are all well here, thank you, coming into spring with blossoming trees, etc., but much of the country has had severe winds this week. Best wishes, Sandra

*Editor: Thank you for the letter and the photos which help us build a complete picture, or at least fill in some of the many gaps.*

*We are putting together an extended article as a Special Issue on the two contingents that went from Tamworth for the Boer War. It will contain some maps and the full [military] biography of each man involved, with as much background information as we can find. That will include Lt W Sydenham, one of our military historians has found much of the information already. If anyone has any photos or information on any who went to the Boer War in the two Tamworth contingents that would be great. [Please contact the editor](mailto:editor@tamworthheritage.org.uk). See the Magazine Volume 3 Issues 3 and 4 for the original article and the follow up. <https://www.tamworthheritage.org.uk/Magazine/index.html>*

**Dear Editor**

Another brilliant issue of the magazine has just slipped into my digital universe. This really is a superb publication and everyone should be really proud of it.

The latest edition of An Elford Childhood is looking great and I love the links and additional material you've sourced. The background information on *that book* was also really helpful



Staff Sgt. Doris May Buttery © Ann Nibbs

and jogged a memory. I have a feeling I actually read that while at Infant School back in 1959/1960! We never thought anything of it back then. I cringe now!

I noted your comments in response to my letter concerning my mother's experiences of life in the ATS and I shall, of course, be delighted to send it to you. It runs at around 6,600 words so would you like it in its entirety or in smaller chunks? Just let me know what works best for you and also whether you have a deadline in mind.

Many thanks  
Ann

*Editor: Thanks for the kind words about the magazine and as always I point out the success is due to the contributors, of which you are one! We are delighted that you have set your mothers experience of the ATS. At 6,600 words we will serialise it after the Elford Childhood, alongside another serialisation we have in the works.*

*What would be helpful is if anyone has any photos of the ATS in an around Tamworth from 1935 to 1950. Also does anyone have family who were in the ATS in Tamworth? [Let the Editor know](mailto:editor@tamworthheritage.org.uk).*

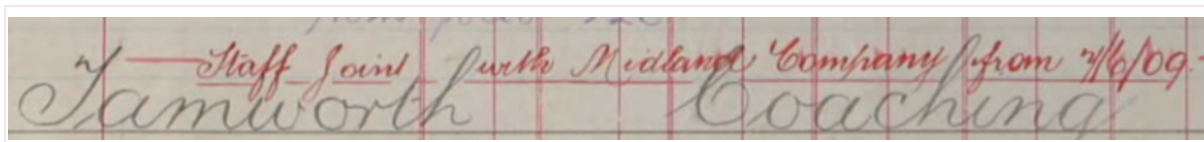
**Dear Editor**

I was going to ask Midland Railway Society colleagues if they could contribute further information to answer your query about the goods yards, then remembered the Warwickshire Railways website which you'll perhaps know, and which no doubt contains much of what is to be known about railways in Tamworth, to which the authors of your spring 2025 article on the Mysterious Tamworth Curve no doubt also referred. There are items on both the High and Low Level stations:

<https://www.warwickshirerailways.com/lms/tamworthhighlevel.htm>

<https://www.warwickshirerailways.com/lms/tamworthlowlevel.htm>

If you scroll down you'll see that both have a selection of photographs including a few of the goods facilities and maps/diagrams showing the yard layouts. The texts also mention the



cooperation between the London North Western Railway and Midland Railway at Tamworth which developed during the late Edwardian period, and this would have been a consequence of an agreement between them in 1908 to rationalise overlapping services, particularly goods services, by having one of the two companies taking over joint provision at many locations, enabling staff numbers and costs to be reduced.

The implementation of this can be seen from an entry in one of the LNWR staff registers covering Tamworth, shown above.

Coaching incidentally was the term used by both the LNWR and MR for staff engaged with passenger services and other staff more generally at small to medium sized stations, to the entries under this heading would have included the station master and his staff of porters, clerks, etc.

I can't say much about the justification for two goods yards, with or without cooperation, but as the links between the two lines at Tamworth seem not to have played an important role, particularly after an alternative through route for much of the joint traffic was opened and one of the curves at Tamworth was removed again, as your earlier article mentioned.

I assume that the two yards provided largely independent goods facilities for each line's traffic, delivering and collecting local goods.

Certainly neither of the yards looks to be large enough to handle re-marshalling of trains which arrived on one line and left on another even when the curve was still there; I'd tip on them only being there to meet each railway's local needs.

I will however sound out colleagues on whether they have ideas for a further article about different aspects of Tamworth without taking too much from the Warwickshire Railways website material.

Perhaps the station staff would be a possibility, although I'd need time to look into it. With this in mind, I also see that there's a genealogy group

in Tamworth, perhaps they have someone interested in this angle; local cooperation would be very important, I'd hate us to offer something about Tamworth prepared far away and lacking local knowledge.

Good to exchange mails with you again. Let's keep in touch.

Best wishes.  
Graham

*EDITOR: Many thanks for the information on the multiple Tamworth goods yards. Your Editor is merely a functionary who lays out the magazine and relies on the many domain experts who can assist with information, photos, maps and links. It is people like Graham, and his team at <https://midlandrailwaysociety.org.uk/> who can supply the technical and specialist information on the local railways when others write personal or local histories. Collaboration and research is the key.*

*We can muse on what Tamworth might have become had the two curves, linking the two main lines, and the two goods yards taken off. Tamworth could have become a major railway town and distribution hub long before the motorways were even thought of nearly a century later. You can see the modern warehouses around the M42 junction. Tamworth could have become a trading town, especially as we have canals, which were starting to make a comeback. Though unknown to many Global Warming has brought most of the entire English canal system to a standstill for several months due lack of water.*

*If there are any canal historians or societies who would like to give your editor a call to discuss the canals around Tamworth we will be interested to talk to you. [Editor@tamworthHeritage.org.uk](mailto:Editor@tamworthHeritage.org.uk)*

**Dear Editor**

In response to your request for information about the Rathole venue in the 1980s, I was the main organiser. It all started after presenting a fund raising show at the Assembly Rooms for the Band Aid Trust in 1985 for Bob Geldof's Band Aid Trust I got the buzz for promoting bands in Tamworth.

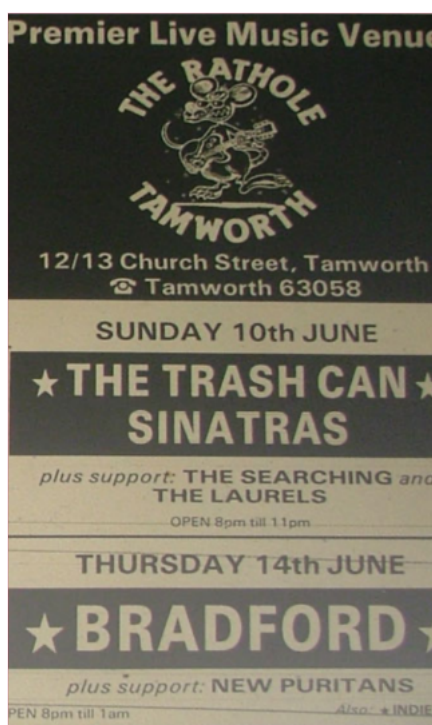
I chose the name for The Rathole being a huge fan of the Boomtown Rats. It was going to take place in the top room of St. Edithas Church Hall in College Lane. At the time church hall had been rented out by a local bookmaker, Alan Webb who ran a very successful flea market there and the cafe.

We agreed on a rent of £40 per show which was a huge amount at the time, but I was sure we would get the punters in. When the church found out there would be alcohol on the premises, they told Mr Webb that we couldn't use it.

We didn't get this information until 8 hours before the event was due to start! I lost my bottle, put a notice on the door saying "tonight's show is cancelled". I didn't even have the guts to tell the band that the gig was off.

The Editor of The Tamworth Herald Music Box column, Sam Holliday had given the launch of The Rathole a half page write up. The following week he ran a story with the headline "What happened to the Rathole" it wasn't very complimentary.

Eventually the Rathole was started in 1986 in a scruffy, upstairs room above a trendy wine bar called Manhattans (formerly The Monica Cafe in Church Street). The owner Clive Bartram had invested his savings into the downstairs bar and didn't have the money to do the upstairs room. But for The Rathole it was perfect. I was keen we should start making a Big Noise (a local Tamworth band) around town. The [NME](#) would occasionally take the pee about this backwater town near Brum. But like they say all press coverage is good press.



We soon started to attract some mighty fine names. Including [The Wonder Stuff](#), [PWEI](#), [The Primitives](#), Teenage Fantasy Club, [Ocean Colour Scene](#), basically anyone who was anyone in the indie world at around that time. See [Tamworth Bands](#)

When Clive got the money together he decided to refurbish the upstairs room. So we moved to Tamworth Arts Centre for 6 months. Jon Garfoth the manager was a very experienced arts administrator, who when running concert halls in Blackburn and Dunstable, promoted many bands including The Sex Pistols, The Clash, Ian Drury and the Blockheads and the Boomtown Rats.

We quickly built up a friendship and John became one of my closest friends and eventually became my business partner.

The Rathole regime welcomed such luminaries as The Cranberries, The Toy Dolls, Adorable and The Wonder Stuff once again. My policy was to book the big named indie and rock acts and give support slots to the local bands. The Rathole ran till the mid 90's. By which time it had ran its course and it was it time I moved on to

pastures new.

Interestingly The Wonder Stuff was one of the first bands I booked, and 38 years later I am still booking The Wonder Stuff Star And Front-man Miles Hunt with his fantastic solo show.

Regards Ian Gibbons

*Editor: Many thanks for that. Does anyone else have memories of the Rathole? The problem is the lack of photos of the Rathole. If you have any please contact the [Editor](#).*

# Next Edition

## Spring 2026

**Publication Date: 1st April**

**Copy Date: 16<sup>th</sup> March**

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](mailto:Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk)

**Copy Date (to in send article) 16<sup>th</sup> March**

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](mailto: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](mailto:Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk)



## In the Next issue

**The Next Issue is Volume 4 Issue 2 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 2 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](mailto:Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk)

Tamworth

# HERITAGE

Magazine



Preserving the Past, Recording the Present  
Safeguarding the Future