

Tamworth

HERITAGE

Magazine
v2i2 Spring 2024



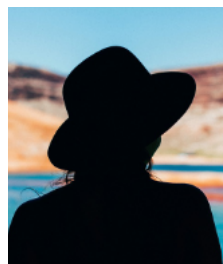
Preserving the Past, Recording the Present
Safeguarding the Future

Tamworth Heritage Magazine

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



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Cover Image: Old "new" fire station in Lichfield Road on the day it was demolished. © **Jamedia 2010**

Back Image: The new fire station in Lichfield Road that replaced the one above. © **Jamedia 2012**

Tamworth Heritage Magazine Editorial Board

The Editorial board assists production of in house articles and checking of submissions.
This board currently comprises:

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

Diane Wells, of the [Tamworth History Group](#) who has a lot of experience in local Tamworth history coupled with many years teaching in Tamworth.

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

Anthony Poulton-Smith Ba, Assistant Editor, a well known speaker and author on things historical having written numerous books on historical subjects.

Dr Simon Peaple 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.

Preserving the Past, Recording the Present
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Welcome from the Editor

Progress is *still* being made!

Things are going well, sort of. We have some longer articles this time, which caused me to move some to the next issue. We aim for 36-40 pages and are over 40 for this one.

Apologies to the authors expecting their article in this issue, I have started to lay them out in the summer issue. We aim for 36-40 pages but this one is already 44 pages. Also, you may have noticed the front and back covers are a fire station, yet no article on the fire service. We were due to have several linked items on the Fire Service but the main source of reliable information (an out of print book) was only found 48 hours before we completed the layout for this issue. So, far too late to write an article for this issue but it should be in the next issue. **We won't compromise the research for copy dates!**

One thing you will note from the letters pages. We have readers coming in with information for authors. We are starting to get quite a network building up and people are helping to fill in gaps in the history. Even for family histories!

On that note we would like to Interview some of Tamworth's older residents to build up a living history of Tamworth. This is happening with the Glenn Cottage Story where we hope to be interviewing the oldest living members who can talk about the history as they lived it. In 100 years' time this will be invaluable.

At the moment we are talking to people connected to the articles in preparation but we can expand on this to anyone interested to talking to us about Tamworth in the 1930s onwards, as Enid did about her time living in the Old Stone Cross Pub as a child.



TAMWORTH

Explore. Play. Enjoy

Visit Tamworth

You may also notice we have the Tamworth T symbol on the Magazine and Website. This is part of Tamworth Council's drive to promote all things Heritage in Tamworth. See the website <https://www.VisitTamworth.co.uk> and plan a visit to Tamworth.

Tamworth Heritage Magazine Meeting

On the idea of a network, I thought it might be good to have a gathering of contributors and readers sometime, well those who are local. We have readers and contributors across the world! However for those that can get to Tamworth UK I thought a Christmas Party but but "everyone" does those and everyone is busy.

So I thought how about something in January when things are less hectic and we could actually get a venue. What do you all think? A Heritage Magazine networking event in January? Email the Editor and if enough people are interested we can organise something.

That is promoting Tamworth *Staffordshire* but the Magazine does have links to the other four Tamworth's around the world and we have a wonderful article from Tamworth New Hampshire USA that gives their history from before it was called Tamworth!



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An Elford Childhood : Growing up in a Staffordshire Village 1920-1933

by Doris Buttery



Elford possibly 1930s
Tamworth Digital Archive

Introduction by Ann Nibbs

My mother, Doris May Buttery (1920-2018) was the third and last of the children of Elizabeth (1883-1970 née Hinks), known as Lizzie, and John Thomas Buttery (1886-1965) known as Jack. Her brothers were William (Bill -1909-1990), and George Frank (Frank - 1913-1970).

Mum wrote an account of her childhood memories in several stages, probably commencing sometime in the mid to late 1960s and into the 1970s. Please bear that in mind when reading; some of the phrases she uses are not regarded as politically correct in the 21st century. **[Editors Note** *If anyone has a problem please complain directly to the author of the diary, Mrs Doris Buttery.*]

At the time she was writing, at least some of the people she mentions were still alive so, in case it might be published, she decided to change their names, and indeed the names of the village of Elford (which she called Tamford) and Tamworth (renamed Wigworth), along with a number of others. Fortunately, she left a key, listing the pseudonyms and real identities – at least of some of them. Thanks to the diligence of Greg Watkins, a local historian living in Elford today, I have now discovered the identities of a few more of the characters who play small, but nevertheless significant, roles in Mum's story and have dragged them out from behind their fictitious names. I am left unsure of whether Mr Day is his real name (perhaps it was Mr Knight? Such was the not-so-subtle nature of Mum's



Doris May Buttery 1931

© Ann Nibbs

subterfuge!) Inevitably, owing to the passage of time, I am not sure of some of the others either, and they too will appear here under her allotted pseudonyms.

In editing, I have done little to alter her own words, merely added some punctuation now and again, and removed some instances of repetition. Here then is her account of life in a small Midlands village a century ago – a world far removed from the one in which we all now live.

Ann Nibbs.

Part One: Village Life

By Doris May Buttery

My father was demobilised in Spring 1919 with a bounty of £20 and no job. He was too proud to seek any kind of national assistance so he, my mother and two brothers lived on their savings whilst Dad cycled all over the Midlands looking for work.

He eventually obtained work in the summer of 1919 when the advertisers were so impressed that he had bicycled nearly forty miles for an interview, they decided he really needed the job. Of course, it wasn't what he had been used to, but he was thankful to get it, especially as there was a rent-free house going with it.

He and Mother and the boys could not move in right away, however, as the existing occupant was expecting a baby and had been guaranteed the tenancy until after the birth. Dad obtained lodgings, first of all in Harlaston (a village two miles from Elford) and, after a few weeks, he moved in with a childless couple in Elford which was most convenient as he was, at that time, working there. Soon, his new employers acquired an ex-Army lorry and Dad was able to start the job for which he had been engaged, which was to deliver cattle feed from a warehouse in Tamworth to all the farms in the district. Some corn was ground at the water mill which belonged to Dad's employers and stood beside the river opposite our house in Elford.

A year after the rest of the family took up residence in Elford, I was born on 23rd October, 1920.

I suppose by modern standards we had very little, but we didn't feel deprived in any way. In front of our house was a water pump which we shared with our next-door neighbours. Each morning Dad would fill up two large buckets with water from the pump. These buckets were kept carefully covered and stood on a small table in the kitchen. Beside them stood a jug, used to ladle water from the buckets into kettles. We had no water laid on in the house at all. Not many people in the village did.



May Day celebrations, Elford 1931

© Ann Nibbs

The lavatory was across the yard and was of the bucket type which had to be emptied frequently into a hole Dad had dug in the garden. The council houses up the road had water closets, but the tenants had to carry water in a bucket to flush theirs.

Our weekly baths were taken in a big, galvanised bath in the back kitchen with water heated in the washing boiler. The bath was placed in the corner beside the boiler, and very cosy it was too, especially in winter. Soft rainwater was collected for the purpose in two huge storage tanks in the back yard and an assortment of butts. In an arid summer, when these ran dry, Dad and the boys (my elder brothers Bill and Frank) carried water from the river. I cannot remember this happening very often, but neither do I remember anyone complaining when it did.

There was, of course no electricity. We had oil lamps downstairs and candles in the bedrooms. Anyone wanting to visit the lavatory after dark had to take a hurricane lamp with them. On cold winter evenings bedrooms were made cosy with the lighting of a Valor heating stove, and each person had a hot brick, wrapped in flannel, to put in their feather bed. You had to be careful not to put your foot on the safety pin which secured the wrapping (ouch!). The bricks used to be placed in the oven immediately after tea and, with the huge fires which cheered our winter evenings, they became very hot indeed.

We never suffered any shortage of fuel. A ton of coal was delivered each September and tipped (loose) by our front gate. We all lent a hand in the carrying of it into the coal-house.

Under the apple tree in the back garden, we had a 'stick-nick'. These were stacked tree trunks ready for sawing into logs and smaller pieces which were chopped to make

kindling. Quite near our house was a small wood and we often collected firewood there. On the roadside opposite were several elms and on many a windy night Dad was awakened by a motorist requesting help to move a fallen tree off the road. All of these ultimately found their way into our fire.

We were self-sufficient as far as fruit and vegetables went. In addition to the large garden belonging to the house, Dad rented some tithe land across the road which ran along the back of our house. There he grew potatoes and turnips. A large part of our garden was taken up with a poultry run. Mother kept white wyandottes and made a few shillings selling eggs to people from the town. She had regular customers and they were never let down. If the hens were off laying, we were the ones who did without eggs. Never the customers.

Each spring, Dad would buy a hatch of day-old chicks and the same thing always happened. As soon as he brought them home, Mother and I would spread newspaper on the kitchen floor, open the box and lift out the yellow chirruping, fluffy balls. Mother would scatter a little chick food and we would drool over these delightful little babies. Dad would scold us for picking them up and stroking them, but he knew it was useless because neither Mother nor I could resist them. Soon he would come and collect them and put them in a coop with a broody hen who would cluck with delight as they nestled beneath her. I always marvelled that never once did any of our hens squash a chick.



The Buttery Family c 1931

l-r – Bill (aka Billy), Frank, Lizzie, Jack and Doris, outside their home. Jack's much-prised roses can be glimpsed on the left

© Ann Nibbs

Next day the door of the coop would be opened, and the chicks and their foster mother would be allowed into the chicken run. My brother Frank and I spent many happy hours digging up worms for them and how we laughed to see a chick at either end of a worm disputing ownership. I'm afraid we never gave a thought to the poor worm.

We also kept a pig in a sty in the adjoining meadow. This land belonged to Dad's employers, and they allowed him to make use of the buildings on it. Frank and I were given the task of gathering comfrey which grew wild along the side of the road, and is highly nutritious for pigs.

On the day our pig was to be slaughtered I used to be sent off earlier than usual to school. The pig bench would already be set out in the back yard and the water in the copper was boiling in readiness. As I went through the gate, Mr Wilson, the pig killer, and Dad would be going through the meadow to fetch the pig. By the time I got home again, everything would be cleaned away and the two halves of the animal hung suspended from the hooks on the centre beam in the kitchen. But, on one never-to-be-forgotten

day, Mother had to go into Tamworth on some urgent errand. There were few trains a day from our little station, so she left Mr Wilson to lock up. I had known she would not be in when I returned home from school, but on such occasions, I knew the back-door key would be on a ledge in the lavatory so I could let myself in. It didn't happen very often, and, in any case, Mother was always home within half an hour of my arrival.

On that particular day, I opened the back door and there immediately facing me was the pig on its hooks with a bowl below to catch the drips. I had seen this sight many times, but I had never actually been alone in the house with a dead pig, so I carefully closed and re-locked the door, replaced the key in its hiding place and went to call on Miss Case who lived next door. Frank was at college so when mother returned and found I was not at home she guessed where I must be. She herself had been taken aback by the sight which greeted her when she opened the door. It was definitely not what she had instructed.

I would have been about seven or eight years old at the time, but Miss Case told Mother I had not mentioned being frightened at all. After all these years, I cannot remember whether I was or not, but it clearly made some impression on me, or I wouldn't remember it so vividly all these years later. Mother, of course, was very concerned, but it was alright now she was home.

Nowadays people would be horrified at the idea of a seven-year-old letting themselves into an empty house where there was an open fire, even though it was well guarded. In those days however, we were so well-drilled in home safety, almost from birth, that accidents were a rarity. In fact, I do not recall a single incident of burning or scalding in our village. It would never have occurred to any of us to play with matches which were, in any case, kept well out of reach. Nor would we have dreamed of interfering with the fire. Only older children were allowed to 'make it up'. Younger ones steered well clear.

In the house next to ours lived Mr Day, the manager of the mill. Miss Case was his live-in housekeeper. Mr Day was a soldierly looking man with silvery hair and a military moustache. He was in his late fifties and Miss Case would be fortyish. She was, in my mother's opinion, not a very good housekeeper as she tended to be a bit



Approaching Elford 1930s
© Ann Nibbs

slapdash in her methods, but she evidently looked after Mr Day well enough. Before she arrived on the scene, his housekeeper had been a Miss Graham who had been with him for nearly thirty years. It was after she died of cancer that Miss Case came to keep house for him.

I liked Mr Day a lot and often used to go round and see him. He was always kind and seemed to have time to listen and talk to me.

We were one of the first households in the village to own a wireless set, which my brother Bill had built from a blueprint. Dad told me I was not to tell anyone we had one, so I promptly told Mr Day next time I saw him. I was perhaps around four years old at the time.

'I hear you've got a wireless set,' Mr Day said to Dad the next time he saw him.

'Now who told you that?' asked Dad.

'The little girl told me.'

'Oh,' replied Dad. 'Well, yes, we have. I bought the licence today.'

I heard this exchange so was quite surprised when Dad asked, *'Why did you tell Mr Day about the wireless when I said you were not to tell anyone?'*

'I didn't think you meant I couldn't tell Mr Day,' I replied.

'Well, when I say you're not to tell anyone that includes Mr Day in future.'

Of course, I realise now that it was on account of the licence that I was supposed to keep quiet. In those days, before television, if you had a wireless you must buy a licence and that was an expense my parents could well have done without.

One morning, when I was around eight years old, we were awakened by Miss Case hammering on our door.

Dad opened the door.

Her voice trembled. *'Please can you come? I can't rouse Mr Day. I'm sure he's dead.'*

Dad hurried next door, saying he didn't suppose Mr Day was dead at all, but he was soon back to get properly dressed to go across to the Mill to telephone for a doctor.

'Not that it's much use.' he remarked as he left the house.

The doctor came on his motor bike and confirmed our old friend had indeed passed away. Miss Case was quite overcome by the suddenness, as were we all.

Dad took on the responsibility of informing Mr Day's cousins, who lived some distance away, and they arrived promptly to make arrangements for the funeral.

Now, what they did not know, but both Dad and Miss Case did, was that for many years Mr Day and Miss Graham had enjoyed an intimate relationship. After pondering on this for a while, Dad went round to see the relative, along with Miss Case.

'Has anyone,' he asked, *'informed Miss Pearl Day?'*

'Miss Pearl Day?' came the chorus of amazement.

'Who on earth is she?'

'Pearl is Mr Day's daughter.' Dad replied.

They turned to Miss Case.

'Did you know of this?' One of them asked.

'Oh yes,' she nodded. *'Miss Pearl has stayed here several times.'*

Then, of course, confusion reigned because no one knew her address. Both Dad and Miss Case knew she lived in Rugby but that was all.

Fortunately, the next day, a letter arrived for Mr Day, and Miss Case recognised the handwriting. She took it to Dad who opened it, made sure it

was from Pearl and sent off a telegram.

Pearl arrived with her fiancé late that evening. She was a charming young woman and as soon as the cousins saw her, they knew her parentage could not be disputed. She was so much like her father in looks and mannerisms. Naturally, it wasn't until much later in my life that I learned all this. In those days, such things were never discussed in front of children.

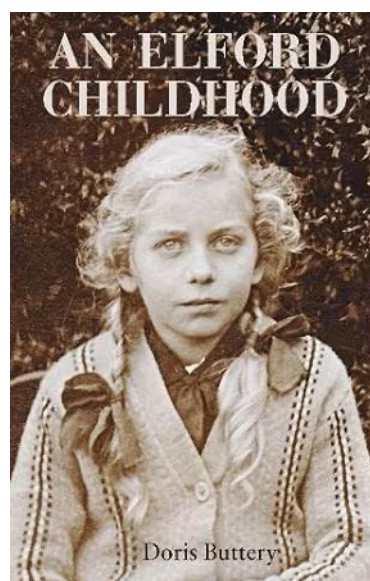
I do remember, however, that Pearl's fiancé came rushing into our house saying, *'I can't believe it. I just can't believe it,'* and Dad following him in and telling him to pull himself together and think of Pearl.

After he had gone, I remember Dad saying that the young man wasn't half good enough for Pearl.

When I asked Mother about this many years later, she told me that Pearl's fiancé had been shocked to discover she was illegitimate. Mother said she wondered if they'd ever marry because she thought he was the sort of man who would let such a thing prey on his mind.

Next time: Sundays were rather different in those days...

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.



The two moats of the Moathouse

By Chris Hills



The Moathouse is Tamworth's largest single home and one of the largest and oldest buildings in Tamworth after Ankerside Shopping Centre (largest) and St Editha's church (oldest). However despite being the Moathouse it does not appear to have a moat. Looking at old maps and documents it never appeared to have what most people would think of as a moat. This is quite odd considering the river would give an easy and ample supply of water.

Actually the Moathouse does have a moat and at one time had two at the same time! Confused? Let me explain. As we all know in the Saxon times Aethelflaed, the Lady of the Mercian's fortified Tamworth with a burh, around 913CE. This burh, an earth and timber bank, a "wall" of sorts, ran from Lady Bridge up along Aldergate and before turning east, to the south of Albert Road, back to the river. This burh protected the west and the north, the river the south and east. The river was the moat for the town.

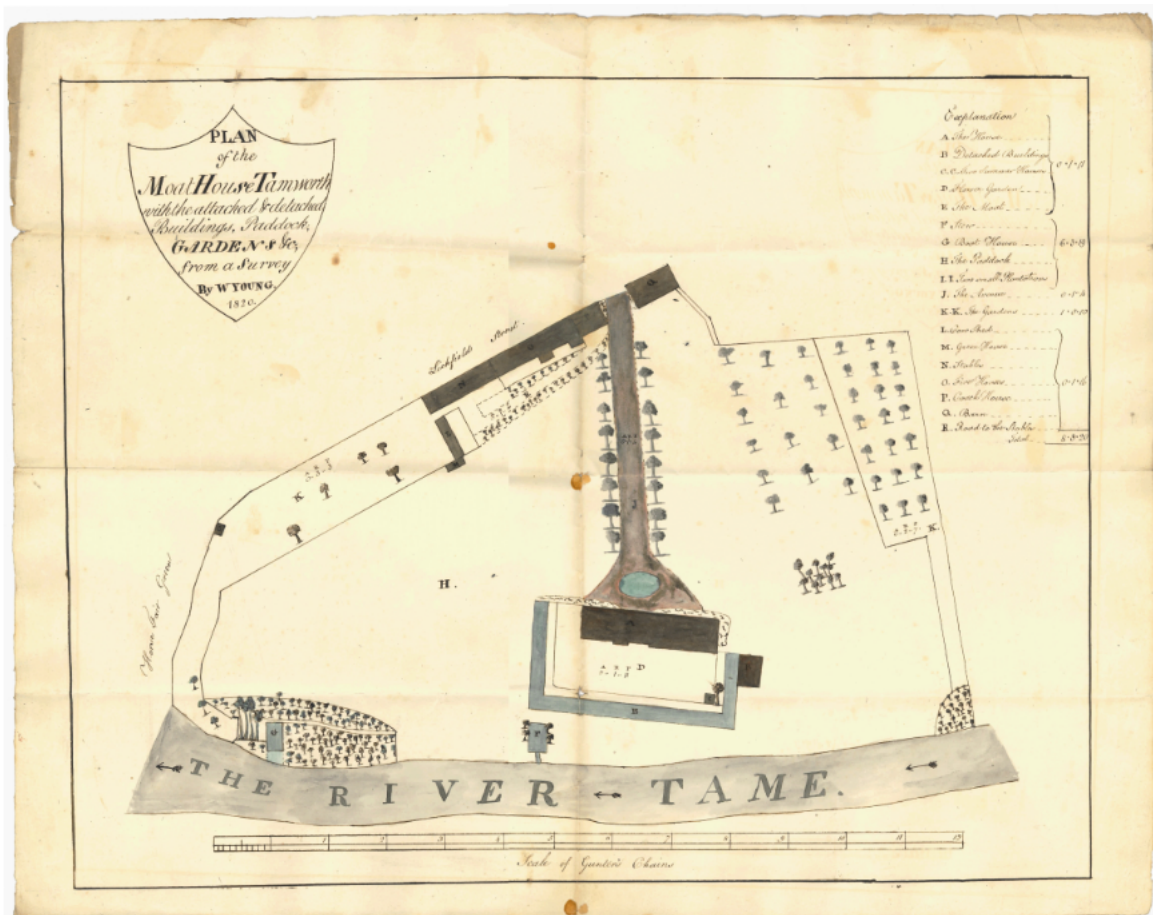
Thus the Moathouse to the west of Tamworth was built against the [town] moat with views south over the flood plain. In fact on some old maps the river is marked as "the Moat"

In the mid-late 1700s Capability Brown was all the rage and appears to have worked on some gardens in Warwickshire. Brown's signature, other than moving mountains of soil, was creating lakes and rivers.

Clearly the lack of moat around the house, in the form castles often have, must have come up in the discussion by the owners. There is no suggestion Brown was involved at all otherwise the entire flood plain would have become lakes, bridges and other water features.

However in the plan of the Moathouse dated 1820 is a water feature enclosing the formal garden to the south. This is labelled as "The Moat". It is separate to the river. So someone at some point decided that the garden needed a symbolic, ornamental moat.

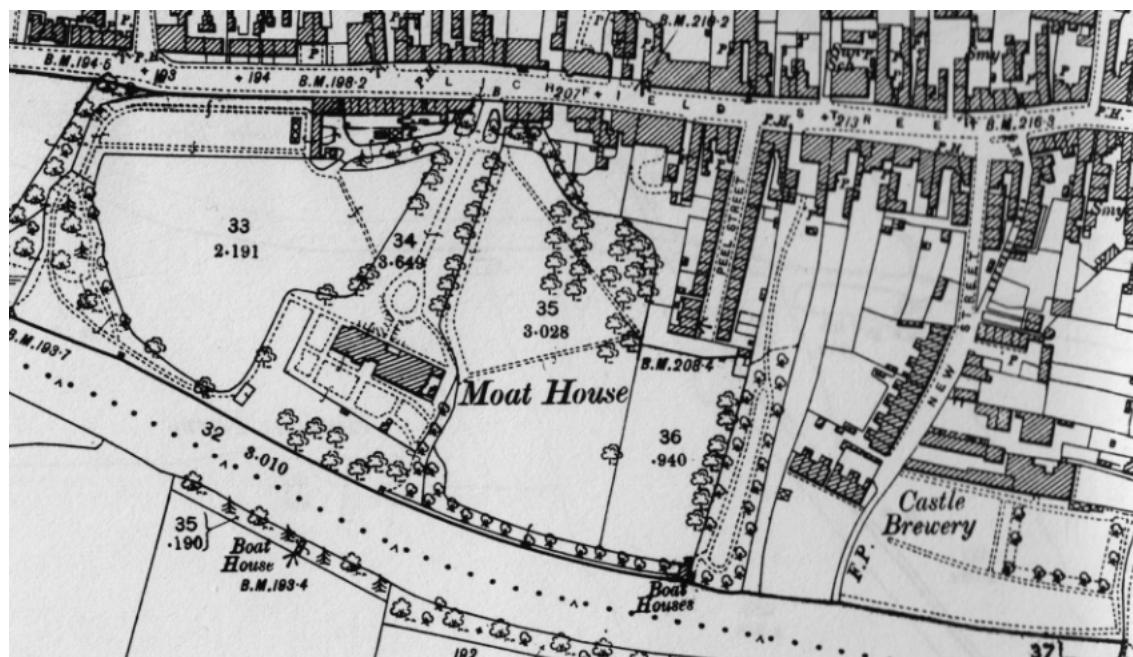
As the drawing opposite says it is from a "survey" suggesting that in 1820 that moat was actually there. There are no signs of the garden moat now and none on any photographs or drawings I have found thus far. Photography didn't really start until the 1850s. So from approximately 40 years after the survey drawing there is no sign of the



above: 1820 Survey of Moathouse
 Kate Bath nee Hollins Now in
 Staffordshire County Archive

garden moat. The river moat is still there but with four bridges, three road and one pedestrian, crossing the moat into the town centre it is less of a barrier that it once was, except, possibly, in the rush hour.

below: Tamworth 1900s
 Tamworth Digital Archive



This season's significant dates and events

collated by
Anthony Poulton-Smith



1 April 1889 - from today Tamworth is wholly within Staffordshire. Above The Staffordshire County flag

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

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

12 April 1947 - Tamworth-born mathematician Ernest Titterton is the last Briton to leave the Manhattan Project

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

20 April 1914 - major fire at No.1 pit shaft in Kingsbury Colliery trapping around 400 men, they eventually escaped via No.2 pit head.

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

8 May 1996 - Brian Jenkins, MP for Tamworth, makes his maiden speech in the House of Commons. See recently discovered video recording of full speech.

[Click here to play video to right](#)

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

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

15 May 1886 - birth of Hubert Pearson, this Tamworth footballer played for West Bromwich Albion in the 1912 FA Cup Final

15 May 2002 - death of actor Bryan Pringle, best known for playing the character Cheese and Egg in the series The Dustbinmen

17 May 2022 - Marc Albrighton, footballer who won the Premiership with Leicester City, receives the Freedom of the Borough of Tamworth

19 May 1961 - birth of Tony Coton, goalkeeper who made his professional debut for Birmingham City and saved a penalty against Sunderland with his first touch of the ball after just 54 seconds.

29 May 1963 - birth of Blaze Bayley, lead singer with Wolfsbane and for a short time Iron Maiden

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

8 June 1973 - Margaret Thatcher opened the new Tamworth Central Library

11 June 1657 - clergyman Thomas Blake dies in Tamworth

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

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

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

26 June 1643 - Tamworth Castle is besieged by Parliamentary forces in the English Civil War

29 June 1846 - Sir Robert Peel's last day as prime minister





The History of Drayton Manor Leisure Park

by Fred Bromwich

Seventy-four years ago this Easter, a Tamworth man's vision of creating one of the country's leading inland leisure attractions started to become more than just a dream. Here, journalist Fred Bromwich traces the history of Drayton Manor Resort and its founder, George Bryan, a pioneer of the British theme park.

A FAVOURITE SINCE THE FIFTIES

Much-loved Drayton Manor Resort has been a favourite leisure destination of families ever since it first opened in time for the Easter holiday in 1950. And what better time could there have been to welcome the public through its gates?

It was a definite pick-me-up as Britain emerged from the shadows of World War II – especially as just two months later motorists rejoiced at the end of petrol rationing! Fuel restrictions had been imposed in 1939 at the outbreak of hostilities and rationing in battered Britain was not entirely lifted until 1954.

All these years later, I can still recall the thrill of driving off with my parents to visit the park alongside other families who had suddenly discovered a new-found sense of freedom after ripping up their fuel coupons. Not that I can remember venturing into any cafeteria, where a cold meat luncheon was on

Above George, Vera and Children the early days. [Bryan Family Archive](#)

sale for about 3s (15p). Like many others at the time, we just tucked into a picnic on the grass, sitting alongside Dad's Ford Anglia – and looking forward to splashing about in the paddling pool and having a ride on the "snake-train." Little did I imagine that 60 years later I'd be partying with my own grandchildren and great-grandchildren – not just a picnic this time, but (as a birthday treat) enjoying the delights of a VIP room in Thomas Land before they raced off to experience white-knuckle rides and a soaking on Splash Canyon (beats a paddling pool any day). How times change!



The Snake Ride 1950s
[Tamworth Digital Archive](#)

Decades after that first visit, however, while working as business editor of The Birmingham Post, I met George Bryan, who co-founded the theme park with his wife, Vera, and discovered for myself just how remarkable a successful entrepreneur he was. Through his business talents, and a dedication to help those less fortunate than himself, George became an admired figure in the West Midlands, richly deserving the OBE that was bestowed upon him in 2004.

It was with much pleasure that I was able to spend many a happy hour with him and Vera discussing and writing "Memories of a Family Fun Park" – the book that charted the history of Drayton Manor and the Bryan's entrepreneurial journey.

Yet when George and Vera Bryan opened Drayton Manor in 1950 their ideals and vision were the same as those of later generations of Bryans – to offer visitors a fun-packed day of excitement at an affordable price. And to continually challenge themselves to improve the park's visitor experience.

In the unsophisticated 1950s, youngsters were happy enough to build castles in a sandpit, pretend they were cowboys while taking a pony ride – or imagine they were on the high seas instead of being in a children's boat on a very shallow pool.

Parents could "gamble" the odd penny or two on coin slot machines such as The Clock where, for 1d, they would spin the hands on the dial and hope for a pay-out of a few pence more. I doubt whether few people knew then that such machines were the inventions of George's father, [William E Bryan](#) – a remarkable engineer who himself became a leading figure in the amusement industry.

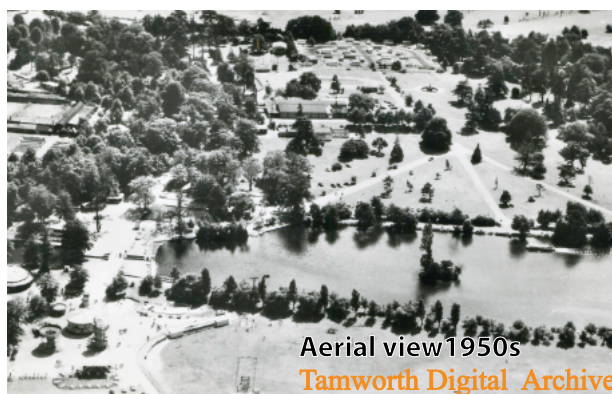
Not only did he invent, design, manufacture and supply the coin-operated machines ([inventing almost 50 of them in total](#)), which became popular attractions on seaside piers and street-corner amusement arcades, but he also introduced a range of wind-driven toys, marketed as **Bryan's Breezy Toys**. More information can be found here <http://www.melright.com/bryans/history.htm>

Some of the machines can still be found in use today in arcades up and down the country.

No wonder that George regarded his father as King of the Penny Arcade!

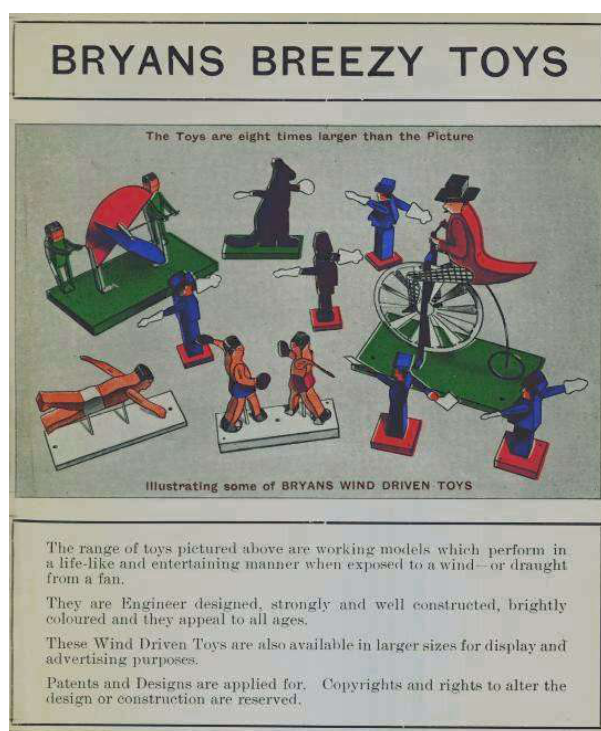
Today, with fabulous attractions such as Thomas Land, the 'World of Imagination' is still very much part of the appeal of Drayton Manor. Thrill-seekers may have taken themselves to new heights with major roller-coasters and crowd-pulling, stomach-churning rides but essentially the theme park remains family-focused.

To date, the theme park extends over 280 acres but when George and Vera acquired Drayton Manor in 1949 for around £12,000 the site covered just 80 acres.



Aerial view 1950s
Tamworth Digital Archive

The estate, which had been occupied by the Army during the war, resembled a giant tip with 17 derelict army huts, overgrown pastureland and huge mounds of rubbish.



Site clearance 1950s Tamworth Digital Archive



But after six-months of back-breaking hard work, George and his gang of helpers, were ready to open to the public – although facilities were restricted to one tiny restaurant, one tea room, three hand-operated rides, half-a-dozen rowing boats, some pedal cars and a set of second-hand dodgem cars. But the ‘magic’ was already there – and it’s still there today, though



The first rides 1950s
Tamworth Digital Archive

the resort is no longer owned by the Bryan family (having been acquired by the Looping Group in 2020), who are acknowledged as having been vital ambassadors for regional tourism and key supporters of Staffordshire, Heart of England tourism and a raft of local and national charities.

When the theme park, now re-badged as a resort, first opened admission was 6d (2.5p in today’s money) and half price for children. People were encouraged to turn up and “picnic-in-the-park” – and fleets of coaches brought families from Birmingham, nearby Tamworth and other parts of Staffordshire, who were all in search of a relaxing day in the countryside. Today, the coach parties still come in their

droves to visit an attraction that became one of the five largest theme parks in the UK. Sadly, from the visitor’s point of view, admission charges have increased somewhat. However, “offers” are always available on-line – and for day-long value, it’s still one of the best deals around.

But back to the start. Both George and Vera served their leisure industry “apprenticeship” at California-in-England, a 70-acre estate in Berkshire, which was owned by Vera’s father, Alfred Cartlidge.

The Pavilion: California-in-England. Bryan Family Archive



After the Great War, Mr Cartlidge manufactured 14-seater motor coaches and organised trips to the South Coast. But when Parliament passed an Act in 1929 prohibiting the use of coaches on the roads over a certain width that was it. All of Mr Cartlidge’s coaches were too wide – so he sold them off to a business in Jersey and then went off to develop his country amusement park!

Vera, who had left school at the age of 14, first had the task of helping with the teas, serving visitors by the lake but eventually took over the running of the tea shop, with all the responsibilities that that involved.



The first coach park
Tamworth Digital Archive

Years later, when World War Two broke out, Vera donned bib-and-brace overalls and spent five years working alongside her father (who had closed the pleasure park and converted his restaurant into a factory manufacturing vital parts for aircraft) – much of the time as an acetylene welder!

As for George, at the age of 19 he volunteered for the Army, joining the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, later serving with the Royal Army Ordnance Corps and the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. While serving with REME at a base near California-in-England he attended a dance in the Sgt's Mess and it was there that he met Vera – admitting that he later took dancing lessons so he could meet her again.



George in Egypt : 1942
Bryan Family Archive

During the two years or so that George spent at California-in-England he and the Cartlidge family created a ballroom, restaurant, opened up the lake for swimming and boating and constructed a paddling pool. It was with a sense of pride that George built the park's first "snake train," which weaved its way around the picturesque lakeside to the constant delight of visiting families.

With such experience under their belts, it was little wonder that George and Vera decided that they

The couple married the same year – 1942 – while



George and Vera's Wedding Day: 1942
Bryan Family Archive

George was on embarkation leave waiting to go to Egypt. Honeymoon was a five-day stay in London, while the "wedding feast" saw them consume a large tin of Danish gammon which Vera's father had somehow managed to save.

After the war George returned to California-in-England to help Vera and his father-in-law to re-establish the pleasure park business, settling down to home life in a wooden holiday bungalow and then in a flat above the shops which had been constructed in the park. It was there that their son, Colin (who would later follow in his father's footsteps to become chief executive and chairman of Drayton Manor) was born.

would like to run their own enterprise. The opportunity came along when George saw an advertisement in a trade journal which said that the derelict Peel Estate in Staffordshire was up for sale. As a Midlander, George was well aware of the estate's connections to one of Britain's most famous families. In fact, Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel was one of the most important men in the land in the 19th century and, of course, his achievements – including the introduction of the London "Bobby" - live on today through the activities of the Metropolitan Police.

Drayton Manor itself was bought by the 1st Baronet in 1790 who, later, demolished the old Tudor property and replaced it with a square Georgian mansion. However, his son, the Prime

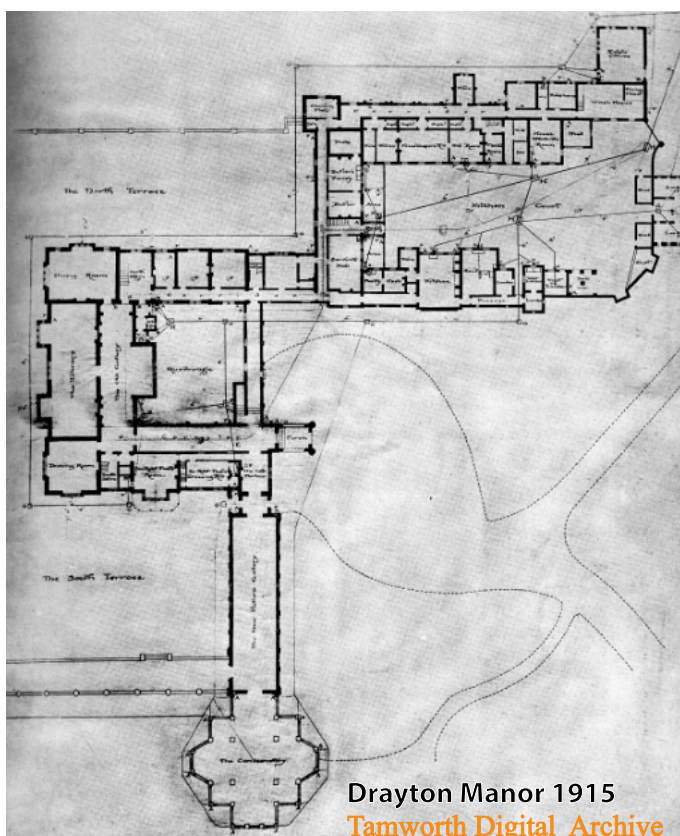


Pool at California-in-England.
Bryan Family Archive



Minister, did not think it was grand enough and replaced it with his own impressive house, which was built in the 1830s. Sadly, the house is no more, having been demolished in 1926, seven years after the Sir Robert Peel family went bankrupt.

Visitors today can still see tangible evidence of her visit to Drayton Manor; in fact most families follow in Queen Victoria's footsteps when they drive over a bridge – straddling one of the brooks – which was specially built for the occasion, as was a road leading from the railway station.



Although the manor itself is no longer standing, there is one reminder of what was such a superb residence – the Clock Tower and the Estate Office.

It was with funding from his family and his in-laws, that George secured 80-acres of land in October 1949 and, in spite of all the odds, he and Vera opened the park to the public at Easter 1950. For the next ten years, he and Vera lived in a flat above the old Estate Office - and "living above the shop" inevitably meant that they worked through the night as well. It was there that the couple's other two children, Jane and Andrew, were born.

To say it took a lot of back-breaking hard work to get everything shipshape for the public is a massive under-statement. George and his gang of workmen toiled for months, clearing lakes and watercourses of silt and sludge, laying down roadways, restoring acres of grassland and removing 4ft high brambles, mounds of rubbish and dismantling 16 old army huts.

In its heyday it had entertained royalty and some of the most important people in the land, including the Duke of Wellington and William Gladstone, both of whom were in Peel's 1841 government. Another visitor was the deposed King Louis-Phillippe of France. However, perhaps the visit of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in 1843 was the most memorable.

When the park eventually opened, Tamworth and Staffordshire still had something like five working collieries and there were dozens more factories in north Birmingham than there are now. So you can understand why so many of the men who were engaged in such hard-working environments just wanted to get out "in the fresh air" at the week-ends.

Of course, Birmingham had its own “playgrounds” such as the Lickey Hills and Sutton Park. But George knew that Sutton Park only ever served tea in a marquee – and he was confident of providing families with much more than that.

The first organised coach party to visit Drayton Manor was a group from Aston Working Men’s Club in Birmingham. George recalled the visit some years later when he was interviewed on BBC Radio WM by historian Carl Chinn – and he said if anyone was listening who might have been on that particular trip they could phone the studio and he would give each of them a family ticket. Before the end of the programme at least five people had responded.

Back in the days when Drayton Manor opened as an inland pleasure resort England was still in the Land of Make-Do-and-Mend as Britain struggled to recover after World War II. George found that it was almost impossible to buy anything new – and he recalled straightening out bent nails so they could be recycled, buying second-hand frying pans (one could fry 28 eggs at a time) and travelling to Blackpool to purchase a second-hand doughnut making machine.

When the park did open, it had one tiny restaurant, one tearoom, three hand-operated rides, half a dozen rowing boats, some pedal cars and a set of second-hand dodgem cars that George purchased in Middlesbrough for £500 after seeing an advertisement in World’s Fair, the “bible” of the leisure industry.

George and Vera hadn’t even started to imagine the exciting, spectacular rides of today but back then, when Drayton was more like a park with a small funfair than the mega-attraction it is now, families, for the most part, were just happy to bring along a picnic and relax in the grounds.

Admission cost 6d in old money (2.5p today) – half price for children. But parties were allowed in for free if they bought a meal in the tearoom, where Vera and her band of ladies had lined up huge urns of tea. Hi-tech in those days was a machine that buttered and sliced a 4lb loaf of bread (purchased from Wicksteed Park in Kettering)– equipment that proved a real boon as more and more visitors decided to splash out on sandwiches and afternoon teas rather than bring their own picnics.

As Drayton Manor grew, so did the workforce – and George always had a policy of recruiting its staff from the local community. Its workforce became an extended “family” with loyalty the name of the game. In later years, George admitted he had lost count of the number of long service awards he had distributed.

A number of ex-miners were employed in the early days – all of them who jumped at the chance of an “open-air” existence after years of working “down the pit.” One such man was Geoff Ingram, who had been working as an electrician at a local colliery when George first met him.

Geoff became foreman at Drayton Manor. Superb at DIY with a gift for being able to make, or do, just about anything, George found his support invaluable. Geoff helped build some of the early funfair rides, including the popular “snake train” – so called because of the way it weaved its way around the grounds. George made the carriages from ex-landing craft and other Army surplus, while the axles came from bomb-carrying equipment.

Eventually Geoff left Drayton Manor to help Molly Banham start up Twycross Zoo – itself now very much a leading visitor attraction. In the late 1950s-



Drayton Manor 1950s
Tamworth Digital Archive



Drayton Manor 1950s
Tamworth Digital Archive

early 1960s, Molly's performing chimps were a massive attraction at Drayton Manor, eventually becoming famous as the "stars" of the PG Tips television commercials.

It wasn't long before George and Vera could see that Drayton Manor was becoming a very popular attraction with families living within the Birmingham and Tamworth areas – and as time progressed they were soon serving 2,000 teas every Saturday. They realised it had the potential to develop into a playground for the whole of the Midlands and, maybe, even beyond.

At first, they didn't really know how to describe themselves, after all, tourism, as such, in the UK had hardly been "invented." So they settled for being an "inland pleasure resort" before the industry evolved and Drayton became a "theme park."

With increased attendances, George decided to acquire some children's paddle boats and a number of rowing boats – which meant that he and his team had to dig out a pool, largely by hand shovel. A roller skating rink followed and so did the opening up of a second lake where visitors enjoyed time in motor driven hire boats. Donkey rides were introduced for children and so were Punch & Judy shows as the public suddenly found themselves demanding more and more.

In 1954, Drayton Manor opened its first self-service cafeteria - then, a somewhat rarity. In fact, it was such an innovation that canteen staff

couldn't quite get used to the idea that they no longer had to wait on people! Five years later, George linked up with Jim Shipley, a member of one of Britain's great fairground families, who took a lease to run the amusements arcade – a move which allowed George to concentrate on the expansion of Drayton Manor as a whole.

Jim even introduced bingo to Drayton Manor and as his arcade brought in more and more visitors the whole place was buzzing, with more than 6,000 visitors flocking through the gates on Bank Holidays.

It wasn't until the end of the 1950s, however, that the park was able to significantly increase its facilities, purchasing 13 new rides, one of which, a 19th century-built carousel is still going strong today.

The park also invested in a new chairlift (opened by Miss Great Britain), which cost £27,000 to buy and install. But George found himself paying an unexpected additional cost of several hundreds of pounds. Those who were airborne when the chairlift – now a thing of the past – was in full swing had a bird's eye view of the gents' urinals, which were then open-topped! Hence the unexpected expenditure on a hurriedly erected roof for the toilet block.

Next came a Jungle Cruise – and 6,000 people turned up to see it officially opened by John Noakes of TV's Blue Peter fame.

TOWER SUITE ENTRANCE



The park took a further step forward in 1960 when it redeveloped the tearoom into a ballroom and added the fully-licensed Tower Lounge. Ten years later the Hamilton Suite opened however the 70s was not a particularly happy decade and it was one that put Drayton Manor severely to the test. An OPEC price war saw an end to party group catering, there were strikes, power cuts and countless other problems and it was not until the early 80s that the economy really started to move again.

From teas and tug-of-war competitions on the lawn the park had diversified into holding evening functions, dances, wedding receptions, anniversary parties and annual dinners. And that meant that big band names of the day became popular attractions. For those who can still remember, they included the likes of Victor Sylvester (he always liked egg-and-chips for his meal), Edmundo Ross, Joe Loss, Kenny Ball and Acker Bilk, to name but a few.

The era of the big rides, whose magnetic appeal attracts legions of thrill-seekers from all over the country, came along in the 1960s. The park's first major ride, the Chairlift, opened in 1964, its installation heralding the start of an expansion phase which by the 1980s had witnessed a doubling in size of Drayton Manor. Between 1990-2005 the park's investment in new rides and other attractions was in excess of £30 million, as well as annually spending £800,000 on essential maintenance.

Its first proper white-knuckle ride was the log fume, which opened in 1981 but this was eventually replaced in 1999 with the more exciting Stormforce 10 – a wet-knuckle ride and the country's first reverse chute water coaster. Constructed at a cost of £3 million, it won a top leisure industry award as Best New European



Drayton Manor 1960s Tamworth Digital Archive

Attraction – just one more accolade to add to the numerous awards bestowed on the park over the years.

It was 1994, however, that turned out to be a milestone year. That was when the park launched the £4.2 million Shockwave, Europe's only stand-up roller coaster – it was an instant success and became the darling of the Roller Coaster Club of Great Britain, which voted it the Best Stand-Up Roller Coaster in the World.

More rides followed: Apocalypse, Pandemonium and G Force, launched in the summer of 2005 by chart-topping "popera" group, G4, who delighted the crowds with a rendition of "My Way" before becoming the first people to brave the new-look ride. The same year the park hosted one of its biggest events – a sell-out VE Day 60th anniversary celebration attended by over 5,000 people. Nostalgia ruled that day, with the sounds of Glenn Miller, marching bands, a spectacular firework display and a Spitfire fly-past.

But even as the theme part developed its "big rides" feel, George and Vera knew full well that continuing to provide less scary attractions, such as the Jolly Roger family boat ride, Excalibur – A Dragon's Tale and a 350-seater theatre, would enable them to provide the perfect mix, catering for both families (toddlers to grandparents) and thrill-seekers alike.

A firm family favourite ever since its opening in 1957 has been the park's 15-acre zoo with its collection of over 100 different species ranging from birds of prey to big cats and a fascinating Reptile House.

For those of us with long memories, perhaps you might recall the late John Foden, who was curator at the zoo for about 20 years. John was a remarkable man who during his career also worked for Dudley Zoo and was the author of a number of books on herpetology. In addition, he was a founder member of the International Herpetological Society and acted as a consultant at Birmingham and Heathrow Airports, working with Customs & Excise officials to rescue rare endangered species which were illegally imported into Britain.

As an expert in his field (John was the first person in the country to breed golden pythons in captivity) he was also at the forefront of providing snake serum to hospitals and indeed helped to start a serum bank at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine to combat the effects of snake bites.

Almost inevitably, after years of working with venomous snakes, one day John was bitten. John then cut his own wrist, calmly walked into the offices and phoned for medical attention. That's when the drama really started. For the serum that was needed for John's injection was in London - and it had to be flown by Phantom jet to Birmingham before being driven under police escort to Drayton Manor. Fortunately, John survived!

Sadly, John died in 2000 at the relatively early age of 52 after a two-year battle with cancer. So well was he regarded by the community that several hundred people attended his funeral service at St Peter's Church, Drayton Bassett.

One of the reasons why George decided to open the zoo in the first place was that it should be "educational" and it was with this in mind that the zoo established its own special "learning centre" with a dedicated Education Officer and a programme of tailor-made education packages for schoolchildren.

George and Vera were passionate in their belief to "give something back" and their regard for the local community and the welfare of those on their ever-increasing payroll, coupled with the respect that was shown to them in return, cemented a "family" relationship that endured for years.

Two years after moving to Drayton, George became a member of Tamworth Round Table (while Vera joined the Ladies Circle), later

joining Rotary and, in 1969, when he became president helped conceive the idea of an annual Kids Day Out at Drayton Manor – an initiative which involved 500 Rotarians giving up their day to help entertain 1,500 disadvantaged children.

The same year, service to the community took George in another direction and he was asked to join a Hospital Management Committee to act as a lay manager for hospitals in Tamworth, Lichfield, Sutton Coldfield and Erdington. George served on the committee for four years during which time he developed a strong interest in the mental health sector; a commitment which ultimately resulted in George helping to form a new type of "watch-dog" group, known as Community Health Councils.



St Giles Hospice
Tamworth Digital Archive

George was elected as CHC chairman and through that role he met the Rev Paul Brothwell of Whittington Church. One day he told George that the vicarage was going up for sale and his wish was that there was some way the property could be converted into a hospice. The idea eventually became a reality with George being one of a seven-strong group which helped found St Giles Hospice – still providing an invaluable service more than 40 years later.



St Giles Hospice
Tamworth Digital Archive

And it was with a sense of great pride that George hosted a special ceremony at Drayton Manor in 2004 when the Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire presented the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service to St Giles Hospice volunteers. It was also in 2004 that George was awarded an OBE for services rendered to tourism.

George also served on the Burton-on-Trent-based South East Staffordshire Health Authority, which gave him another opportunity to get involved with mental health.

Altogether, George spent many years serving on hospital committees but it was in 1985 that he experienced one of his proudest moments, and one that was to last in his memory for ever. That was when he was called upon to officially open a 28-bedded mental wing at the Sir Robert Peel Hospital which was named after himself. Sadly, the George Bryan Centre, which provided medical treatment to people with mental health issues, was destroyed by a huge fire in 2019 after an arson attack.



At the age of 75, George stepped down from being a Tax Commissioner – a duty he performed for 21 years, sitting on a tribunal once a month helping taxpayers solve whatever differences they had with the Inland Revenue. He relished the time he spent there because, as he said, it was all about helping “real people with real problems.”

As for Vera, after her voluntary work with the Ladies Circle and Inner Wheel friendship organisations, she memorably undertook significant charity work, with the Royal National Lifeboat Institute (RNLI) being one of the organisations nearest and dearest to her heart; enjoying a connection which went back to her childhood days when she stood with a collection box, cajoling the public to give a few pence in order to support the lifeboat men.



For many years, visitors to the park also helped to fund-raise for the RNLI – for George's son, Colin, who took over as chief executive in 1987, negotiated an agreement with the charity that it would receive 1p every time someone took a ride on Stormforce 10, one of Drayton's most popular attractions. In 2004, when Vera was 86, she “launched” the “Drayton Manor Lifeboat” in a ceremony at the park – the culmination of an exercise which raised a grand total of £75,000.

However, as the lifeboat was made of rubber she couldn't break the traditional bottle of champagne over its bows, so she had to pour the bubbly over the vessel instead!

Video Interview with Colin . Click link or picture <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqluhlcrMOo>



George, William, Colin Bryan
and Helen Pawley Bryan Family Archive



Loved by families, the running of Drayton Manor was very much a family affair in itself. When George was appointed as chairman, his son Colin stepped up to become chief executive; daughter Jane acted as company secretary and her husband, Richard Pawley, the park's operations director, stayed at Drayton for 27 years before branching out on his own. Richard, a leading figure in leisure development, and Colin were instrumental in creating the era of new rides at the park.

Edward and Helen - Jane and Richard's children – also had senior roles in the organisation, as indeed did Colin's sons, George and William,

who later would become the family's third-generation managing director.

By the time Drayton Manor celebrated its Diamond Anniversary in 2010, a million visitors a year were pouring through its gates - - and for the fourth time it was being judged the Best UK Attraction for Children by readers of the Group Leisure magazine; just one of the many awards that would win over the years. It was a year when the park also entered a spectacular new phase of its development- one which was to see the commencement of work on of the park's piece de resistance, a £15 million 150-bedroom hotel. The project would initially create 40 full-time and 30 part-time jobs.

George and Vera
Bryan Family Archive



For Colin Bryan it was a far cry from the days of 60 years ago when his parents opened Drayton Manor – and when he was a toddler trundling around a toy wheelbarrow and pretending to help the builders!

Complete with conference and banqueting facilities for corporate clients, the hotel heralded in an exciting new era for the park, taking it further up the top league of UK leisure destinations. Families especially loved its Thomas the Tank Engine themed-rooms, reflecting the fame of Thomas Land, the enormously popular attraction which opened at Drayton Manor in 2008.

Thomas Land – the only one in Europe – represented a major investment, with £7.5

million being pumped into the project. Right from day one, when an extra- special guest, a six-year old boy from Sutton Coldfield by the name of Thomas Land, attended the official opening, the attraction has proved to be one of the most popular crowd-pullers in the Midlands.

It was with a sense of great loss to the community that George and Vera both passed away within a month of each other. George, who was an inspiration to those he met with his passion and humility, died at his home on 20 September 2013 at the age of 92, while Vera died on 16 October aged 96. Only the year before they had celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary.

Hundreds of people attended their funeral services, both of which were held at St Editha's Church, Tamworth.

NEXT TIME: How floods, Covid and tragedy signalled the end of the Bryan dynasty

About the Author

Fred Bromwich is the Vice Chairman of Birmingham Press Club (the oldest Press Club in the world) and a Former Business Editor for the Birmingham Post and Mail

<https://birminghampress.club/>



Parachute Ride 1960s
Tamworth Digital Archive

Roller coaster Club of Great Britain at Drayton Manor Park
Bryan Family Archive



Doorway to Tamworth

Where is this doorway in Tamworth? Each issue will feature a door in Tamworth town Centre. Some will be well known, some historic, some quirky and some a little more obvious, like this large gate. It is in a main shopping street in the town centre. But do you know where?



Last Issues Doorway:
Entrance to Burton's Pool Hall above Burton's Men's outfitters
At one time all Burton's clothing shops had a pool hall above.

Photo © Jamedia

Staffordshire History Centre – Update by Sarah English

This is an essential resource for anyone interested in Staffordshire History and Hesitate. It has had to close to the public so it can be reborn much expanded and with more facilities. So for short term pain (for researchers we have a long term gain. Here is the update in the work, *Editor*.

Construction contractors PaveAways Ltd have now been working on the project for 12 months and there is much visible progress; inside existing spaces have been reconfigured into a research and activity room, the new exhibition area is taking shape, and the strong room extension can be seen from North Walls. Restoration and remodelling work is ongoing in the heritage buildings on Eastgate Street; sympathetic decoration and highlighting of period features will allow us to tell the story of this fascinating building.

You can read more and see some behind the scenes photos in our construction update blog post here: [End of Year Construction Update – Staffordshire History Centre](#) Our time lapse video has captured the construction progress over 2023 and can be viewed here: [Staffordshire History Centre - Under Construction September 2023 \(youtube.com\)](#) Some of our volunteers recently enjoyed a hard hat tour of the site to view the progress and we look forward to showing lottery players around in March.

We have continued our limited public service to assist service users with legal or time sensitive enquiries. We continue to run a full enquiry and reprographics service for all other enquiries. [Public Service – Staffordshire History Centre](#) Our latest exhibition Beneath our Feet, which explores the geology and industries of Staffordshire, is on display at the Ancient High House in Stafford until 24 March. The exhibition will continue to tour to Chasewater, Cannock and Newcastle-under-Lyme. More details can be found here: [Beneath our Feet – Staffordshire History Centre](#)

Looking ahead to Spring and Summer 2024 the team will be running outreach sessions at libraries, leading heritage walking tours, delivering assemblies to local schools and developing content for future exhibitions. Work is progressing on digital interpretation for the history centre, and we will also be highlighting some of the star items from our collections via the Staffordshire County Council social media channels. You can watch the video here: <https://fb.watch/qgYqHxM6Ja/>

Video of construction progress to late 2023
Click Link <https://youtu.be/UwgH4BdCrSw> or image below



Although the Archives are not open to the public and due to construction they are much constrained in what they can do: the archive published this video on how they retrieve documents during the construction phase. So do bear this in mind when you ask for things. At least with the summer approaching it will be better than in the cold wet, dull winter days.

Click Link <https://youtu.be/FzBrKmiZOg> or image below



Peel, Sergeant Pepper and Posterity

by Dr Richard A Gaunt

There would appear to be few more unlikely representatives of 1960s counterculture than Sir Robert Peel (1788-1850), 2nd baronet, of Drayton Manor. A dead, white, male, British statesman, widely regarded as the 'founder of modern Conservatism', Peel was a politician to his fingertips and could never have been said to be fashionable.

Peel lacked the extrovert personality, easy charm and sexual liberalism of contemporary politicians like Lord Palmerston and Benjamin Disraeli and was, according to William Gladstone, one of only four Prime Ministers he had known who had never committed adultery.

Unlike his direct contemporary at Harrow school, Lord Byron, Peel could never have been described as '*mad, bad, and dangerous to know*' – '*I was always getting into scrapes* (Byron recalled), *Peel never*'.

All of this suggests that his appearance as one of the sixty-one featured individuals on the cover of the Beatles iconic 1967 album Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band is an eccentric in-joke, his black and white image shoe-horned into the album's iconic cover to provide a smudge of monotone dullness amidst a sea of exotic, interesting personalities.

Yet, in many respects, Peel's surface appearance – the look of stern, statesmanlike regard conveyed in the 1853 print by G.F. Baxter from which it derives – is at odds with the public image which Peel came to occupy in the later stages of his career and the posthumous afterlife he achieved at the hands of subsequent biographers and memorialists.

Today, Peel is largely remembered for his role in founding the Metropolitan Police Force in September 1829. His introduction of 'Bobbies' onto the streets of London built on the successful deployment of 'Peelers' in Ireland, during his period as Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (1812-18). Having built his reputation,

Picture of Sergeant Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band Cover. Due to Apple inc wanting £275 for use of the image you will need to go to the link below to see it.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sgt._Pepper's_Lonely_Hearts_Club_Band.jpg

as Chief Secretary, on the stern defence of Protestantism – a reputation summarised in the epithet 'Orange Peel' which was applied to him by Daniel O'Connell – he reversed his opinions to help see through Parliament a 'Catholic Relief' or 'Emancipation Act', in 1829, which gave political rights to the Catholic population of Ireland.

This legacy, though mixed, was hardly lost on the people of Lancashire, with its close historic ties of



Sir Robert Peel
Authors Collection

migration and settlement with Ireland. More particularly, it was appreciated in Liverpool, the home of the Beatles, where the Gladstone family were amongst the city's conservative merchant elite.



Having risen through the political ranks from Home Secretary in the 1820s to leader of the fledgling Conservative party in the 1830s, Peel achieved a period of majority government during the years 1841-6. That period saw the passage of a range of economic and social reforms, culminating in the decision to repeal the Corn Laws in the summer of 1846. In one respect a response to the Irish potato famine of 1845, repeal was also consistent with Peel's increasingly strong support for free trade, motivated by his belief that Britain's maritime and commercial supremacy would yield it an advantageous position. Repealing the Corn Laws split the Conservative party in two for a generation but assured Peel the warm after-glow of popular support.

The notion that Peel, through repeal, had brought 'cheap bread to the masses' led to an outpouring of popular sentiment in his favour after his untimely death, from a riding accident, in the summer of 1850. Though Peel was only 62, the succeeding decade saw him rise in popular esteem, as a rash of statues, busts and popular memorials sprang up across the northern industrial towns, many of them the

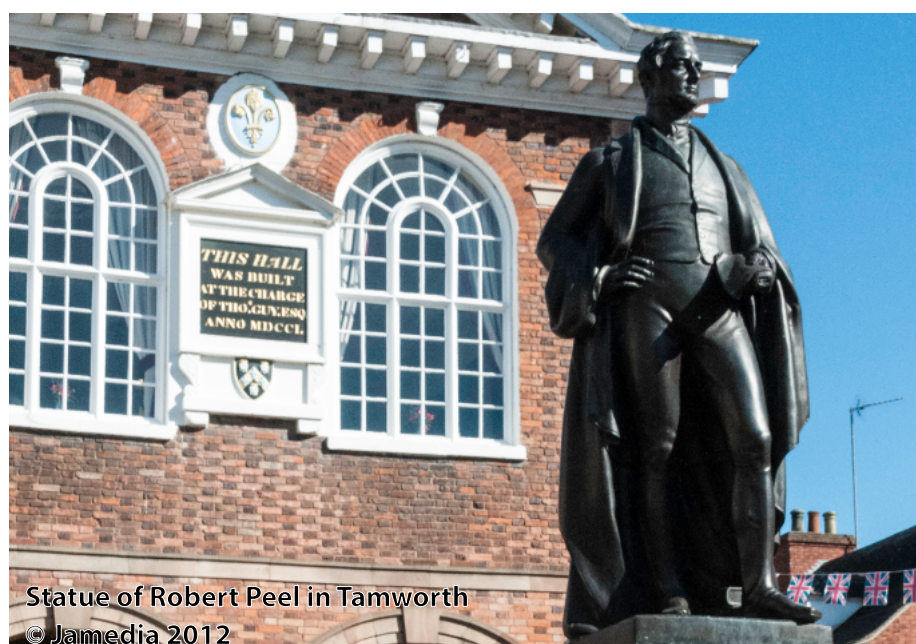
result of subscriptions from ordinary working people. Lancashire was particularly notable, not only as the county of Peel's birth, but in the range and type of commemorations afforded him. Peel Park in Salford and the Peel Tower at Holcombe Hill near his hometown of Bury were two popular sites of recreation from mid-Victorian times onwards, whilst St George's Hall in Liverpool contained a particularly fine bust of Peel by Matthew Noble.

The statues were usually adorned with the text of Peel's final statement as Prime Minister, having repealed the Corn Laws in 1846. Deserted and denied by a large group of his Conservative backbenchers, Peel maintained that his name would be remembered:

with expressions of good will in the abodes of those whose lot it is to labour, and to earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brow, when they shall recruit their exhausted strength with abundant and untaxed food, the sweeter because it is no longer leavened by a sense of injustice.

It was these words, on the base of the Peel statue in Huddersfield, which the man described by Paul McCartney as 'good old Mr Wilson', remembered learning by heart as a schoolboy during the 1930s.

By 1967, Harold Wilson was Prime Minister of a modern, reforming, Labour government, sometimes likened in importance (if not political ideology) with Peel's landmark Conservative government of 1841-6.



The popular aesthetic commemoration of Peel in the decade after his death neatly paralleled his own place in the world of artistic connoisseurship during his lifetime. A man sprung from the self-made middle class wealth of the Lancashire 'cottonocracy' (manufacturers of cotton and calico textiles), Peel was fabulously wealthy by contemporary standards and poured that wealth into careful displays of pseudo-aristocratic respectability.

He furnished a fine country estate at Drayton Manor near Tamworth, the echoes of which survive today as a popular amusement park and was a well-known and respected patron of the arts, counting Sir Thomas Lawrence, President of the Royal Academy, amongst his friends. Peel commissioned Lawrence, and other leading artists and sculptors of the day, to represent the leading politicians, statesmen and contributors to the arts, including writers such as Sir Walter Scott.

He created a purpose-built 'Statesman's Gallery' at Drayton Manor and in his London residence at Whitehall Gardens. Though neither of these survive, some indication of how the 'Statesman's Gallery' was intended to function was evoked, for many years, in the staging of Victorian portraits in the National Portrait Gallery.



Statesman's Gallery, Drayton Manor
[Tamworth Digital Archive](#)

For contemporaries, an invitation to view the latest Peel commission, or to marvel at the wide collection of seventeenth-century Dutch art which he built up over his lifetime, was a rare honour. Peel's taste for Dutch real-life scenes – animals, landscapes and domestic interiors – was an interesting reflection of his tastes. Peel's

purchase of Peter Paul Rubens' celebrated portrait of 'Le Chapeau de Paille' (the straw or felt hat) was re-worked when Lawrence painted Peel's wife Julia in a similarly celebrated composition now on display at the Frick Collection in New York.



Statesman's Gallery, Drayton Manor
[Tamworth Digital Archive](#)

Though Peel's preference for Dutch realism could hardly have been said to be fashionable, when he began collecting art, his association with and patronage of it made his choice and interests a matter of importance to other connoisseurs. In an age when art was only fitfully opening up to the masses, Peel took his position as trustee of the National Gallery very seriously. His son and heir, a dissolute spendthrift given to wine, women and horse-racing, acted far differently.

In a strange twist of fate, forced by financial necessity and a lack of inherited good taste, Peel's heir offered 77 paintings from the Peel Collection for sale in 1871. They were bought by the National Gallery, with government assistance. Today, everyone is able to enjoy them.

Peel's inclusion on the cover of the Sergeant Pepper album was part of the creative process of its creators, Peter Blake and Jann Haworth, with suggestions for featured individuals coming from John Lennon, Paul McCartney and George Harrison. All those suggested for inclusion meant something personally to the Beatles, and

especially to Lennon and McCartney. The image of Peel used was based on the print of an image from Baxter, itself derived from a famous Lawrence portrait of Peel, representing him at the height of his early fame. This reflected the generally positive associations which Peel enjoyed during the period.

Today, Peel is viewed much more evenhandedly by historians. The completion of a monumental two-volume biography of Peel by Norman Gash, in 1972, reclaimed him from a tradition which had largely viewed Peel's life and achievements through liberal spectacles. This led, in turn, to a counter-reaction during the 1980s. Boyd Hilton argued for Peel's role as the father of Gladstonian Liberalism and emphasised the extent to which Peel was ideologically doctrinaire about the causes he pursued, including free trade.

More recently, an appreciation of Peel's mixed reception at the hands of posterity, and of his conscious desire to shape and influence his posthumous reputation in a favourable direction, has been advanced by the present author. Since the controversy over Edward Colston's statue in 2020, Peel's memorialisation has also become a renewed focus of interest because of his family's financial interests in the cotton industry, with its association with the international slave trade.

Though, today, Peel is by no means the most recognisably famous of nineteenth century Prime Ministers, things were far different in his lifetime. In many respects, Peel was an archetypal 'establishment' figure, dedicated to the maintenance of Church and State. Yet he was also, as far as many Ultra-Tories were concerned, a political 'cuckoo in the nest'. Peel helped to shape a pragmatic response to change which has equipped many subsequent Conservatives with their guiding philosophy. In his 'Tamworth Manifesto' of December 1834, Peel pledged himself to a 'careful review of institutions, civil and ecclesiastical', promising 'the correction of proved abuses and the redress of real grievances'.

Nor was Peel unconscious of the desire to secure his good name in history. His representation in busts and portraits, memorialisation in parks and towers and acquisition of portraits and Dutch still-life art was a telling example of this desire. A man who enjoyed attention and the respect of his peers, in art as in politics, could only have been flattered by his subsequent

Sir Robert Peel by Blake

Authors Collection



inclusion on the cover of Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. Look at his image carefully and you will see that he is smiling.

For a Who's Who of all the 87 people on the Album cover click [here](#)

For a video on the making of the Album [click here](#) or on the image below



About the Author

Dr Richard A. Gaunt is Associate Professor in British History at the University of Nottingham and the author of *Sir Robert Peel. The Life and Legacy* (I.B. Tauris, 2010). He has recently published an essay on Peel's memorialisation in Matthew Roberts (editor), *Memory and Modern British Politics: Commemoration, Tradition, Legacy* (Bloomsbury, 2024).

A Quick Trip through the Centuries in Tamworth, New Hampshire, USA by Kate Thompson Co-Chair Tamworth History Center

Tamworth is a small rural town in Carroll County in east central New Hampshire. NH's big Lake Winnepesaukee is a few towns to the southwest; the White Mountains are just to the north. Our winter population is about 3000; it balloons in summer, as people flock north from the Boston, Massachusetts area and beyond, to hike, swim and enjoy the region's natural beauty. (Until recently our winters were snowy and cold, and skiing and snowmobiling were a big part of life.) The town comprises about 60 square miles, largely hilly and wooded, with lakes and ponds, rivers, and streams (we call them brooks).

We have four village centers: Tamworth, Chocolate, Wonalancet, and South Tamworth. Our population runs the economic and political spectrum, from poverty to privilege, and left to right. We have plumbers and poets, farmers and teachers, loggers and lawyers, mechanics and musicians, tots, teens and retirees, and all the rest. (Most of these categories overlap!)

Our K.A. Brett School serves 175 children in Grades K-8. There is a pre-school, several small alternative schools, two libraries, four churches, a free town wide nursing service (unique in the US, sadly, to our knowledge) - a professional summer theatre called 'The Barnstormers', a thriving weekly Farmers' Market, several B&B's, stores and restaurants, small businesses galore, and many organizations devoted to the arts, town history, business, land conservation, outdoor activities, and more. Our town website: <https://www.tamworthnh.org/> And our [Wikipedia page](#) has some nice photos

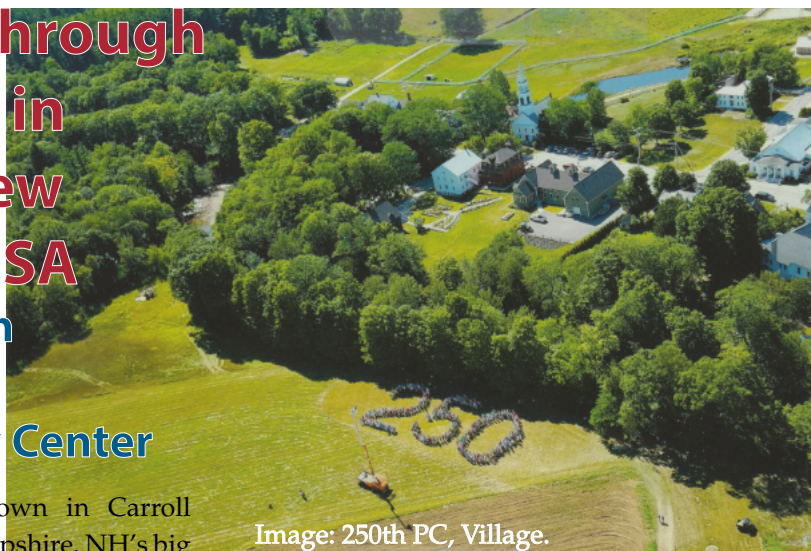
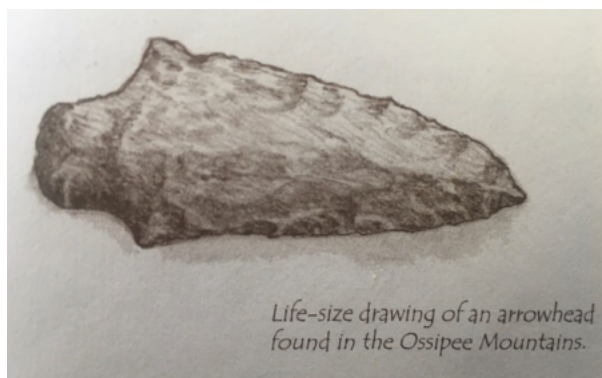


Image: 250th PC, Village.

Here we are in 2016, spelling out the age of our Town. Our year-long 250th celebration was capped off on this summer day with a picnic for 500+ in Tamworth Village. Upper center: our 1793 Town House; right back, our History Center; below and right of it; The Barnstormers. Big building in center: Tamworth Distillery – former site of The Tamworth Inn.

Pre-History:

As early as 700-800 AD (about when Tamworth, UK was the center of Mercia) northeastern New England had become home to a hunter-gatherer population that by the 1700s was known as the Abenaki ("People of the Dawn Land"). Tamworth was part of the Ossipee sub-tribe's territory. Deer, moose, bear and beaver abounded, and fish were abundant in the lakes and streams. The north slope of the Ossipee Mountains yielded an extremely hard basaltic rock which the tribe mined, chipped into arrowhead blanks, and traded around New England.



Life-size drawing of an arrowhead found in the Ossipee Mountains.



3. Ossipees ridge-line in a tranquil present-day scene. Painting by Pat Goodwin.

Native heritage fragments remain – arrowheads, stories, place names, the making of maple syrup, the use of snowshoes and dogsleds made from ash wood and rawhide, and some DNA in local families. Most of the indigenous people of this area perished in early colonial days in conflicts with the newcomers or from smallpox; many of those who survived retreated to the large Penobscot Indian settlement in Old Town, Maine. We honor the Native heritage – inadequately, but perhaps best by our love for the soil, trees, water and wildlife here, and our ecological and conservation efforts.

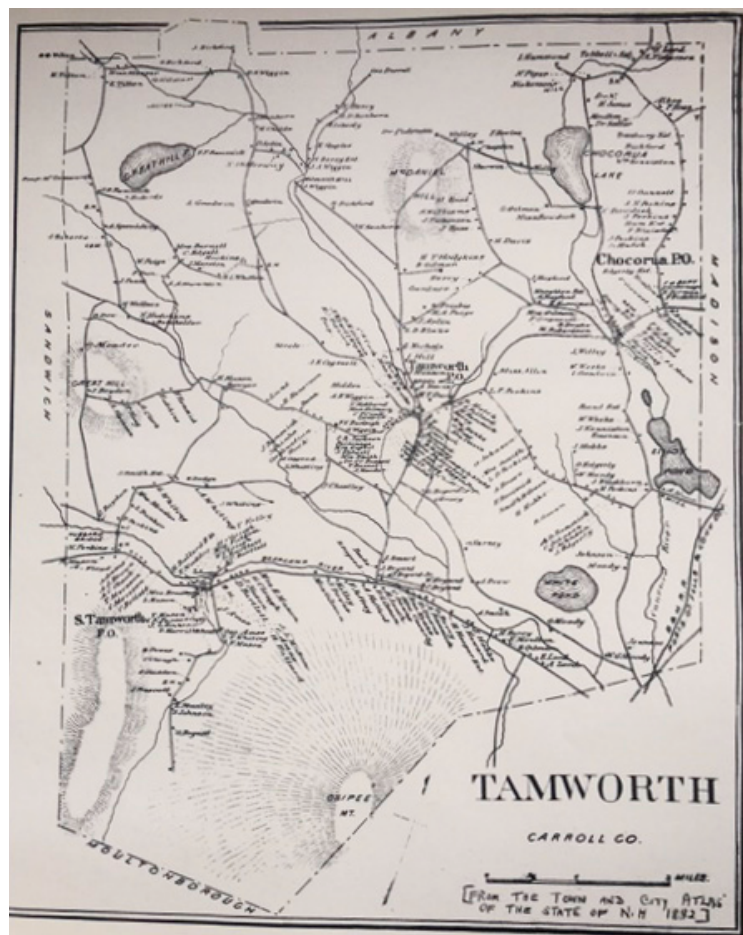
European Settlement:

New Hampshire's coastal city, Portsmouth, was first settled by white people in 1630, and remained a larger seaport than Boston, MA into the 1800s. The state's interior was settled later. The first white settler in Tamworth, 60 miles north, was said to be Richard Jackman, a fur trapper friendly with the Native

people, who lived on a pond that still bears his name.

Tamworth was officially granted in 1766 by colonial Governor Benning Wentworth, and named for his friend the British Admiral Washington Shirley, Viscount Tamworth. ([Wikipedia gives a rather lurid history of this noble family](#), and says the current Viscount resides in either Derbyshire or Norfolk...) Following the grant, families from settled towns like Gilmanton, just south of Lake Winnepesaukee, pressed north into the wilderness here. Early names include

Ames, Eastman, Hackett, Cogswell, Keniston, Meader, and Blaisdell. ([Ancestry.com](#) might help us trace these and others back to England – perhaps even to Your Tamworth!)

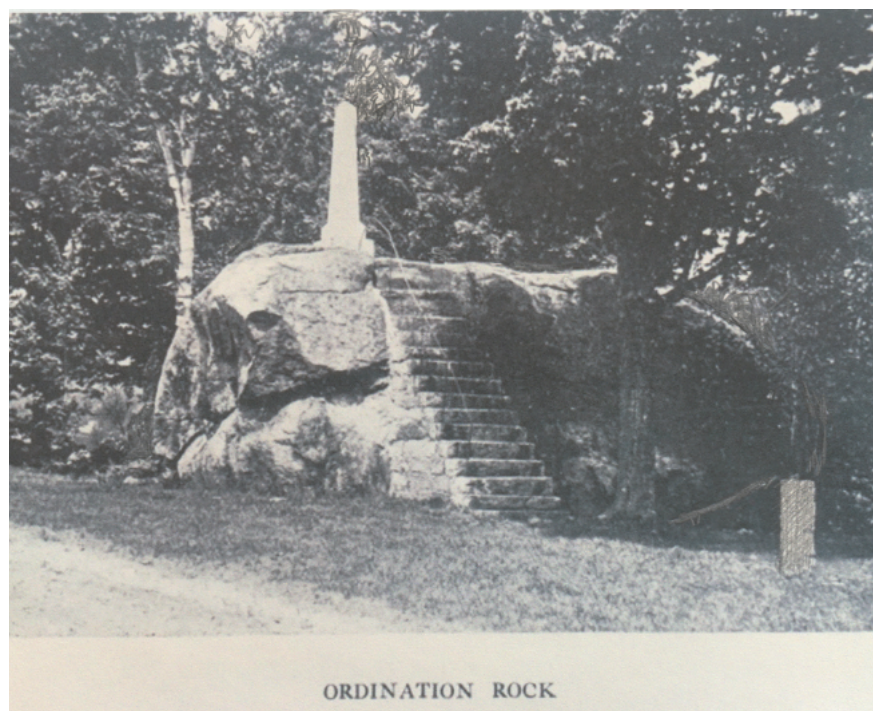


4. 1882 Map of the town

The Shaping Hand: Samuel Hidden, First Minister, 1792-1837

The town as it grew felt the need 'to have preaching'. It took four years to find the right man. Finally some of the men originally from Gilmanton suggested a 32-year-old from there – a war veteran and a graduate of Dartmouth College, a scholar, musician and theologian named Samuel Hidden. Some feared he would be too high-brow. Abigail Eastman, for example, is said to have exclaimed, *"I'd as lief see the Devil!"* But on meeting him, she and they were won over by his cheerful, unpretentious energy. In June of 1792 Hidden accepted Tamworth's call. On September 12, crowds from far and wide gathered at the big glacial boulder chosen for the ceremony. But in a nearby barn, a group of 6 clerics argued over Hidden's theology, delaying the event. The crowd grew restless. Finally Abigail marched into the barn and declared *"He shall be ordained this day!"* And he was.

A man of unusual energy and vision. Hidden led the town for the next 45 years until his death in 1837 - through periods of intense religious revival (the Second 'Great Awakening'); through epidemics, floods and famines. He and his wife Betsy established the third Library in the state, after Portsmouth's and Dover's; he oversaw Tamworth schools, led Shape-Note Singing* gatherings in towns far and wide, helped established Indian missions in Maine, and tutored students in Latin and Greek – not to mention leading three long services every Sunday in the Tamworth Meeting House built for him, replete with tears, passionate prayer and conversions. Hidden's legacy of dedicated civic and educational engagement is alive and well here today. (And his actual descendants are



5. Ordination Rock, 1906, with monument. In Hidden's day, open fields surrounded the rock, and its top was reached by a ladder.

active members of the community - An 11th great-grandson, age 22, is on our select board today.)

* Shape-Note Singing was the home-grown New England hymnody of the early days. Like West Gallery singing in England, it featured stark words and harmonies. Some of us here have loved singing it since its 20th-century revival. For fine examples of old and new songs: <https://villageharmony.bandcamp.com/album/best-of-village-harmony-2011-12-13-2cds>, cuts # 30-37.

"The Rusticators".

By the 1870s, increasing numbers of city-dwellers headed north, drawn to the fresh air, scenic beauty and simple outdoor life of NH summers. (Scotland and the Lake District come to mind.) William James, father of the philosopher, bought an old farm beside Chocorua Lake. Other academic families from Boston followed, and built rustic summer houses with lovely views. The Boston & Maine Railroad carried passengers to the Mt. Whittier Station in



Chocorua Lake and Mountain, by William Frederick Paskell (1866-1951)

Paskell was born in England but grew up in Boston, the talented son of a skilled frame-maker. At age 18 he exhibited a painting at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. He was a protege of the White Mt. School painter Benjamin Champney, and for many years he spent Septembers at the Wonolancet Inn, trading paintings for room and board. This classic view needs no explanation - except that we hope you enjoy this ice-free view for March!

West Ossipee, thence by stage the three miles to Tamworth Village and beyond. Local farmers grew bigger gardens to accommodate the throngs in their guest rooms and cottages; their wives cooked up heaps of fresh country food. Poets John Greenleaf Whittier and Lucy Larcom summered here. Poems were written, flowers pressed, watercolors painted, and mountains climbed - many of which were re-named for Abenaki chiefs and heroes, and two for the visiting poets themselves. And the White Mountain School of painters celebrated local scenery with hundreds of romantic paintings.

Photo: Ed and his Stage

"Drove the Mail and the Express and Never Missed a Train"

Edwin Frank Currier, 1872-1924

"Ed Currier used to drive by our house on the White Lake (Depot) Road four or five times a day between the Mt. Whittier Station and Tamworth Village", recalled Perley Grace. "He had one of the old



coaches with the leather springs, and a place to pile trunks on top.” Ed brought the out-of-town mail to the Post Office in the Village, and carried passengers to and from local boarding houses.

“My husband carried the mail 35 years and never missed a train,” Ed’s widow Florence reminisced. “Sometimes the road was so drifted he had to lead the horses and push back the bushes and birch trees that were down. He had 12 horses here, and 3- and 4-seated wagons, and fur robes.



The men would come in at 3 a.m. to get the horses ready to meet the morning train. People would come into the house here to get warm. Later he got a Pierce Arrow and took the top off and had another top built with curtains. It would carry 12 people and they would put the mail bags on the engine.”

Ed’s son Roland recalled, “Dad had the first auto here - a 2-cylinder 1908 Reo. Got it in Berwick, Maine and drove it home. A man came along to show him how.

A crowd was gathered in the yard to greet him and he got flustered and yelled ‘Whoa!’ The man with him kicked the switch with his foot and they rolled to a stop.”

And later: “One time we went on a trip in the mountains in the Reo. We were all dressed up. The chain drive broke, and there was nothing for it but for Dad to get under the car in the grease in his good

8. July 4 Parade, 1966 - with Pierce Arrows like the one Ed Currier modified.

clothes and mend it. He said “If you drive a car all you need is a pair of shoes. If it runs all right, you go so fast nobody sees you - and if it doesn’t, nothing shows but your feet!”

9. THC’s Hall-Dyer House, February 2024, the day we hosted the Chinook Owners’ Association. Dog-sledding and the Chinook breed have a long history in Tamworth – including a 1928 Antarctic Expedition! See ‘History’ at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinook_\(dog_breed\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinook_(dog_breed))



1966 – our Bicentennial.

Quite a celebration! There were programs, speeches, booklets, programs, dances and parades. A Tamworth quilt was made and a time capsule buried. Men grew beards; everyone dressed up in 1700s garb. The newly formed Arts Council organized an exchange with 'The Four Tamworth's' - yours, ours, and the ones in Ontario and New South Wales. It included an exhibit of children's paintings from each town which travelled to all four Tamworth's in turn for display!

(Authors Note: I'm interested to read online of Tamworth, Ontario's history and its new Gaeltacht, the first Gaelic-speaking center outside of Ireland. And to realize that the town is not so very far away from us in NH!)

The Tamworth Historical Society was founded in 1951. It has had several HQ's over the years; in 2008 we acquired a dilapidated but lovely c. 1830 Federal building nicely located in the middle of Tamworth Village, with a big front lawn/village green. In 2015 we changed our name to The Tamworth History Center - more inclusive and active-sounding. Our building renovation is almost complete. This winter we have been going through our collection of town memorabilia – from petticoats to cobbler's benches to photographs to beaver traps to Samuel Hidden's handwritten sermons. <https://www.tamworthhistorycenter.org>

11. A wood-carving (c. 5" long) of a common NH tool - by Johnson Clark, 1940s.



Our 2024 theme is Traditional Arts: we plan an exhibit and a series of demonstrations and workshops to run June-October – all with as much community participation as possible. 890.

About the Author

A third-generation 'summer person', I've lived here full-time since 1970. I worked at the Tamworth Preschool, painted sets and posters for The Barnstormers, then for 28 years operated 'The Other Store' in Tamworth Village, as well as helping out with environmental efforts and singing shape-note songs with a local group.

Thanks to the Editor, for the invitation to contribute to Tamworth Heritage Magazine! We look forward to more communication in future, with all the Tamworth's. *And we invite you and any of your readers come and visit Tamworth NH any time* (well, best to avoid Mud Season – usually March – and Black Fly Season - worst in June!) But soon! We'll give you a war welcome!



10. Detail of a Tamworth-made silk and painted-velvet Crazy Quilt, c. 1

Great Riot at Tamworth

by Dr Trevor James

In September 1851 the Hobart Courier in Tasmania carried the above headline above an item about an incident at Tamworth Market Hall. Why should an event in a distant provincial town thousands of miles away in England warrant such a level of coverage and attention? The reason is that it emphasised the international interest in the reputational legacy of Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel who had died in 1850. This report in the Hobart Courier had previously been published in the Illustrated London News in May 1851. Its publication in Tasmania does really re-enforce the international interest in the life and legacy of this British statesman.

What was being reported was that in May 1851 a 'protectionist dinner', with a strong presence of farmers, had been held in Tamworth's Market Hall. This building is situated at the heart of the late Sir Robert Peel's constituency and close to his family estate at Drayton Manor. In the course of the dinner and speeches the late Prime Minister had been mentioned. There is no indication of what had been said about him but, given that this was a 'protectionist dinner', it is not likely to have been complimentary, given Sir Robert's reputation for cutting duties and tariffs during his premiership [1841-46]. This modest economic inclination had been overtaken by the effects of the Irish Potato Famine in 1845 which had led Peel, with Whig support in parliament, to abolish the Corn Laws, an artificial device which maintained corn prices to the advantage of farmers but to the disadvantage of anyone dependent on bread or any other corn-based product.

This decision, strongly opposed by a portion of the Conservative Party, led to paradoxical situation where his statesmanlike and humanitarian action was severely condemned as having not been part of their election manifesto in 1841.

Peel had been defeated by the Conservatives shortly after the Abolition of the Corn Laws but his status as a statesman and social reformer did not diminish. When he died in 1850, having been thrown from his horse in Rotten Row in Hyde Park, he was returning from a meeting with Prince Albert which was part of the planning

Y, JUNE 3, 1851.

THE TAMWORTH RIOT.

The following is the reply of Mr. G. F. Young to the letter of Sir Robert Peel which appeared in the *St. James's Chronicle* on Saturday:—

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—The columns of your journal are usually so free from offensive personalities, that I was somewhat surprised at observing this morning, that I am stigmatised by name as a "miserable impostor," in a letter bearing a signature which even I should have imagined would have constituted a security against coarse vulgarity. It appears I was mistaken. The present Sir Robert Peel's taste in composition is on a par with his eloquence.

I shall not bandy scurrility with the hon. baronet; he appears to be a proficient in the art, and I am unacquainted with it. But he is unfortunate in the designation he has affixed to my name. I am conscious of many defects; I may entertain erroneous opinions; I may commit indiscreet actions; but I never put forward personal pretensions, therefore I am not an impostor. The convictions I entertain conscientiously I express fearlessly; but I never attempt to deceive others by professing what I do not believe; and I never deceived myself into a belief that I was so capable of expounding the sentiments I honestly entertain as the friends of Protection throughout the country have been pleased to consider me. It has been only at their earnest solicitation that I have every attended any of the numerous meetings in which, at much sacrifice of time, convenience, and expense, I have taken part; nor have I ever originated or stimulated any of them. But I sincerely rejoice they have been held, and I am proud that I have been permitted to offer even the humble portion I have contributed to their uniform and signal success.

And now, sir, having shown what is not, allow me briefly to describe what, in my judgment, is an impostor. If a man should be discovered who, representing a pure and virtuous Sovereign in a foreign embassy, should be discreditably distinguished as a profligate and a gambler; if as a member of a British House of Commons he should aspire to the dignity of an orator, write his speeches, and break down in delivering them; if after breathing for years the atmosphere of the very land of freedom, he should return to his native soil, professing to be the champion of liberal principles, and be found practising on his vassal tenantry the most contemptible freaks of impotent tyranny—should such a man be discovered, well indeed might he be branded as an impostor, and if he should have ventured to fling the foul epithet at men more upright and consistent than himself, deservedly might he be set down as a calumniator also. Let Sir Robert Peel beware—"They who live in glass houses should never throw stones."—I am, Sir, your faithful and obedient servant,

GEORGE FREDERICK YOUNG.

Winchester, May 31.

The following is the rejoinder of Sir R. Peel:—

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—I pass over without note or comment Mr. G. F. Young's reflections on myself, which appear in your impression of to-day. I leave public opinion to judge of the tone and taste of his language, while personally I have a consciousness, with all my defects, of not having merited his aspersions on my private character.

There is, however, one portion of the letter which I cannot leave unnoticed, namely, that referring to the relations between my tenantry and myself, which is stated to be characterised by the "most contemptible freaks of impotent tyranny."

I enclose a communication, which I hope you will oblige with publication, written by me on the 10th of May to my agent, on the subject of the then anticipated Protectionist meeting at Tamworth.

This letter, which was read to some of my tenants, the contents of it being made known to others, will show the amount of interference I was disposed to exercise on that occasion, and I shall leave the vindication of the general course I have pursued towards them to their own appreciations and testimony.—I remain, Sir, with much respect, your obedient servant,

ROBERT PEEL.

Report from the St James Chronicle on 3rd June 1851 Quoting a Letter in The Times (of London)

process for the planned Great Exhibition. This confirms that Peel was still at the heart of British public life and his reputation with centre-right politicians in Europe, most notably Guizot in France and Cavour in Italy, equally remained high as a conservative politician who had achieved and exercised power in what was an emerging democratic world.

This dinner had been a defiant gesture by those who did not approve of Peel's general and specific tariff and duty policies. The people at the dinner who can be identified included three prominent local landowners – Captain Dyott of Freeford Hall, Mr Newdegate, the Warwickshire MP and owner of Arbury Hall near Nuneaton and Mr Wolferston, the owner of the Statfold Estate. A noisy crowd formed outside the Market Hall, expressing their opposition to what was happening inside and the violence included breaking the windows of the Market Hall. From inside the Market Hall this was clearly an unnerving experience.

When it became clear that the crowd was in no mood to disperse, the attendees made a retreat to the King's Arms Hotel, the manager of which had been at the dinner. The violence and demonstration followed them to the much more cramped accommodation at the hotel, which also had its windows smashed. There was a discussion about sending for the yeomanry from Birmingham but by 2.00am the crowd, described in the report as a 'mob' had dispersed. Apart from some abuse in the street to some of the diners as they made their way to the station the following morning and some inevitable prosecutions for the self-evident criminal damage, this event appears to have been a solitary incident.

My interest in this event is double-edged. There is no secret that in is my judgement that Sir Robert Peel may have been the most important single politician of the nineteenth century, through his reform programme as Home Secretary in the 1820s; his promise of constructive and moderate reform in his Tamworth Manifesto of 1835; and his extensive reform programme between 1841 and 1846; together with his international reputation and popularity.

However it is the nature of the reporting which has attracted my specific attention. The report in the Illustrated London News, which was the repeated verbatim in the Hobart Courier,



presents the attendees at the dinner as victims. My view is that this event and the manner in which it was reported was, in effect, a provocative act, less than months after Peel had been buried in Drayton Bassett Church, to undermine his legacy. If one reads the report closely, one notices that the new MP for Tamworth, the next Sir Robert Peel, had been hostile to what had been planned to the extent that he had forbidden one of his tenants, the licensee of the Kings Arms, to take the chair at the dinner! The truth is that we only have one journalist's version and explanation of what happened.

This reporting re-enforces the difference between press coverage and historical analysis. The latter requires evidence and events to be assessed and validated from a variety of sources or at least for it to be scrutinised by careful evaluation. In this instance we appear to have only one version of what had happened but close examination of this solitary report does reveal a counter-clue in the form of the attitude of new Sir Robert Peel. Even on its own this solitary piece of evidence can help us realise that there is much more to this story than might have initially have been apparent. In other words opponents of protection also had very strong opinions, even though such views were not reflected by newspaper reporting and may not have the resources to hire the Market Hall for a dinner.

About the Author

Trevor James still lectures weekly in Local and Modern History at Sutton Town Hall and is Director of the Young Historian Project. Previously he was the Editor of The Historian 2006-2018.

School Report

by Ray Jones



The photo above was in the last issue saying the Editor had no information on the image. Within a day or two we got the following from Ray Jones: *I was surprised to see a considerably younger me in the latest issue. It was of Headmaster Mr L Brown and a class at Bolehall Boys School. Glascote Road in the mid/late 1940's. Pictured left to right:*

Back row. Mr Brown. X. Robert Heap. X. Brian Russell. - -- Walker. George Atkins. Brian Thompson. X. Peter Griffiths. Albert Dean. Bobbie Wall.

Middle Row - X. Denis Parsons. X. Barry Hinds. X. Terence Munding. - Higgins. Brian Moss. Me (Ray Jones). Brian McGowan. David Richardson. --- Kinson. X. Eddie Lycett.

Front Row --- 'Tich' Redfern. John Crowshaw. Brian - . Alec Ashwood. Brian French. Eric Barber. Ray Rastall. Brian French. X. Brian Weston. Brian Draper.

George Atkins was the son of a local policeman. Terence Munding's father was a police inspector. I was much later a director of the Tamworth Herald. Eddie Lycett had shops in Birmingham. John Crowshaw a farmer at Glascote. Ray Rastall became a lecturer at

Tamworth College. Brian Weston a local football referee.

Any more info to fill in the blanks would be great!

Also can we do the same with this photo, Who is in it? which school, when was it taken? What is the shield for?



Book Review

Festival of Britain: Tamworth

by Cllr W. A. Peel

Published by Johnson and Allsopp 1950

Most of you won't remember the Festival of Britain. It was a nationwide series of events from May to September in 1951.

Indeed as this small pamphlet of 20 pages explains Tamworth had some 30 events from June to September including Tennis Tournaments, Mining exhibitions, Agricultural shows, concerts, 6 Dances and a carnival in the streets.

Apart from the program of events this pamphlet contains an introduction by Councillor W.W Peel, The Mayor for 1950/51 and the obligatory pictures of the Castle, the Church and the Town hall. Along with a very short history of Tamworth ending with "...a small but flourishing community increasing in population and endeavouring in difficult times to maintain and extend the amenities to its people." Did they have any idea that in 16 or so years' time the town population would treble?

That aside the fascinating part for me is, apart from the cover price of 1 shilling, that this was clearly sponsored by adverts from local businesses. Allertons Stores and Café who seem to have done everything from corn and seed supplies to baking, catering and a café! Milo Turner the chemist who were pushing their cameras and films to record the festival. Feltons (Ironmongers)Ltd pushing sports equipment (tennis racquets) The Co-op, obviously as they were a major player in Tamworth. Also an advert, without a car on it, for Rose Bros "main ford dealers". And a council run "Civic Restaurant" that not only served food but would cater for other events. It is not clear of this was just for the Festival year or not.

The other item of note is that not all companies had telephone numbers listed and those who did

had 3 digit numbers except Alton's Stores and Café whose number was "Tamworth 18"! the highest number being 654 for the Civic Restaurant, which if set up for the Festival would suggest there were fewer than 660 Telephones in Tamworth in 1951! For those under 30 I should point out mobile phones and the Internet didn't arrive for another 40 or so years. You had to write a letter and post it or actually go and speak to people face to face.

We hope to be able to digitise this pamphlet for the Tamworth Digital Archive. For those who want to know about the Festival of Britain here is a (longish) documentary on it . [Click here](#) or on the image below to see the video



Letters to the Editor



Dear Editor

Please find attached a photograph of Wilnecote cinema taken from what was the school gardens in the 1930s. As you can see it wasn't much of a cinema and probably started life as an agricultural building.

It was positioned where the entrance to Bowling Green avenue is now and as you can see Wilnecote club is to the left of it. I don't know when either the cinema or the cottages behind it were demolished but it was definitely a long time ago.

Kind Regards: Andy Whiles.

Editor. Many thanks for the image. So far the only one we have. Getting information the films shown and reports from the council but no photos of the building. Some one must have one? As you can see the Editor is not the only person looking for information on the cinema:

Dear Editor

Yes there was a cinema in Wilnecote. As a boy I only knew it as a deserted building. It was situated close to the Wilnecote Working Men's Club.

My uncle Mr Hugh Shakeshaft used to play the piano in the cinema for the silent films probably during the 1930's. Eventually he became the

organist and choirmaster at Wilnecote Congregational Church during the 1950's.

I was born in Tamworth and lived in Hockley Road Wilnecote until I left the area in August 1971.

A short distance away from the old cinema is the Manor House. In the other direction stood Blounts Cobblers shop and then Lakins Farm.

I do have many memories of Wilnecote and the Tamworth area in the 50's and 60's. I hope that this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely
Mr W.B.Shakeshaft

Editor: Yes, it is very helpful in starting to build the picture, despite only one actual picture. Hopefully we can get more information and pictures.

Dear Editor

I have some documents that may be of interest to Helen Jenner regarding her family history.

I live in The Farmhouse, Copes Drive, Tamworth - which was the farmhouse for the market garden owned by her ancestor, Percy Edwin Ball, on what is now the Leyfields estate.

As Helen says, the farmland was compulsory purchased by the council in the 1950s. I have documents and maps relating to the original sale of the land in the 1920s and documents concerning the sale to the council in the 1950s.

I am more than happy for you to forward my contact details to Helen.

Thank you for your interesting magazine and for providing the opportunity for people to share their knowledge.

Sincerely
Angela Gault

Editor, many thanks for the information. We have now put you and Helen in contact and there is an article on the way! If any of you have

information that can add to any article do email the Editor as the authors are always keen to expand their knowledge and add to articles.

Dear Editor

I have read the article in the latest edition about Glen Cottage .. a family history I lived there with my parents and inherited the house and myself and my sisters are not mentioned and the some of the history is incorrect.

Would it be possible to pass my email contact details with this note to the author Rebecca Jewkes . If she could contact me I would like her to know the correct history of the house and I do have photos that of her great great grandfather who built it which she is welcome to I await your response
Kind regards Andrea Lawson
(nee Hastilow)

Editor, many thanks for the information. We have now put you and Rebecca in contact and there is an article done. It would have been in this issue but we ran out of space!

Dear Editor

I wonder if you can help me?

I visited Tamworth today and thoroughly enjoyed my time exploring the Town. I was especially fascinated by **Spinning School Lane** as I am a keen spinner and weaver myself and wanted to know more.

I see from the timeline that it was started by Thomas Viscount Weymouth in 1678, but in 1719 it closed and was converted into Alms Houses. I would be really interested to know more and I wonder if you would be able to point me in the direction of further information.

Best wishes Frances Biseker.

Editor: Does anyone have any information on the spinning (or weaving) or spinning school that was there before the Alms houses? If so

please Email Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk and I will pass on the information.

Hello Editor,

Many thanks for the link relating to public houses very much appreciated.

During the late 1800's early 1900's 'Perrycrofts' can from what I can tell was a cottage with lots of land around. Not sure when the girls school was built and I think the lane leading to the property was Croft lane which later became College Lane [I think].

Could you put into the next magazine a **request for any information on The Ball and King family who lived in Wiggington during the 19th and 20th century plus any photos or information on the Crown Inn of the same years.** If this is not to late to put in. Someone may have some info that may help to complete the jigsaw.

Regards Helen Jenner

Editor Consider it done. Now it is up to the readers. Does any one have any information on the Ball and King Families?

Dear Editor,

I was very interested to read your article in the Heritage Magazine last September, as it added to my sparse knowledge of that part of the family. The only part I would like to clarify is the details of the Woody's as follows:

Dr Robert Woody and his wife Alice (daughter of John Harding, local calico printer) bought the Moat House in 1821 when they had raised enough money. Dr Woody died in 1823, and his wife Alice continued to run the Moat House, succeeded later by their son John Francis Woody (1814-1894).

All very best wishes.

Kate

Editor: Many thanks for the update, we hope to produce a full history of the Moathouse at some point having interviewed, on video, some one who lived there in the 1963. If anyone has any information on the Moathouse in the 1960s-2010s please [contact the editor.](#)

Next Edition

Summer 2024

Publication Date: 1st July

Copy Date: 13th June

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

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

Copy Date (to in send article) 13th 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.

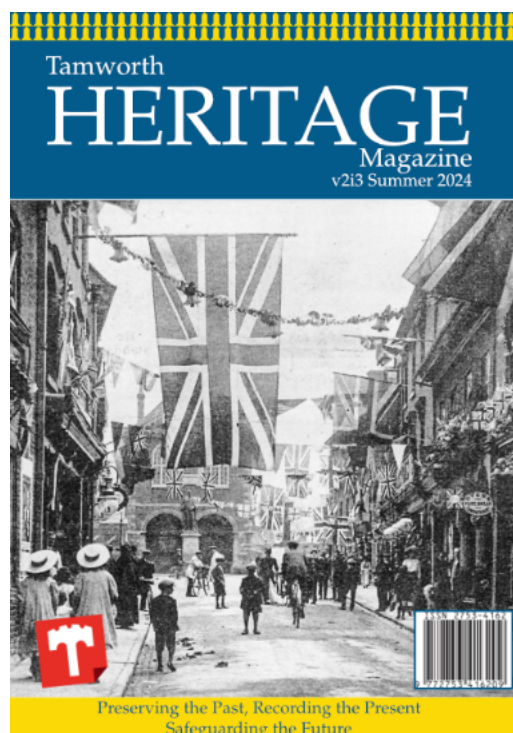
Please send in article/letters in text, RTF, MS doc or docx, we can even accept odt format.

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

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



In the Next issue

The Next Issue is Volume 2 Issue 3 and we are more organised than we were.

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 and the Castle Fire for another! Also one or two places are realising they don't have their history organised as they thought they did! So their articles are taking longer to research than anticipated.

Volume 2 Issue x A Fascinating Article!

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

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

Tamworth

HERITAGE

Magazine



Preserving the Past, Recording the Present
Safeguarding the Future