

Tamworth

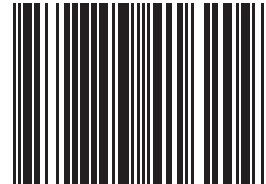
HERITAGE

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Preserving the Past, Recording the Present
Safeguarding the Future

Tamworth Heritage Magazine

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



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Cover Image: Tamworth before Ankerside, Middle Entry and St Editha's Square © JAmelia
Back Image: Aethelflad Stature and Tamworth Railway Station, pointing to the next THM Volume in 2026 © JAmelia

Tamworth Heritage Magazine Editorial Board

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

This board currently comprises:

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

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

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

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

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

Preserving the Past, Recording the Present
Safeguarding the Future

Welcome from the Editor End of an era...

The End of an Era is not quite as dramatic as it sounds. Firstly is the end of the 3rd volume of the magazine and much to the surprise of this Editor we are preparing the first issue of the 4th volume for 2026. I only have one more volume to do after that before handing over to the new editor. I am now over halfway through my time as Editor.

The other End of Era is the Chairman of Tamworth Heritage Trust Roger Bragger donating much of the THT collection to the Tamworth Castle Museum at their archive. The problem the Heritage Trust had was the collection was un-catalogued and poorly stored, the records had been lost and there was nowhere to store it let alone display it as TTN, the owners of where it was being stored, wanted it out. Now it is at an Accredited Museum who will take proper care of it and they will start to catalogue it and ensure it is properly stored and renovated as required. The cataloguing is going to take a long time, months or years, due to the Heritage Trust records, such as they were, being lost.

Actually the THT items are in the queue to be catalogued. The queue has got longer partly due to this Heritage Magazine inducing more donations to the Castle Museum over the last three years.

Should anyone have any artefacts the Heritage Magazine is building a Digital Archive. We would like to scan or photograph them, we don't keep them just borrow them for a short time. Actually this helps the Castle Museum Archive as many of our team are Volunteers at the Museum Archive. So it helps speed up things there if you want to donate anything to the Castle Museum. We give the Castle Museum our scans and photos.



If you want to be part of this exciting project that is actually doing something [see page 26 for details](#)

The Castle Museum is also in a state of flux as the Holloway Lodge, the Archives offices, are being renovated and refurbished, hence the scaffolding around it. It is hoped that it should be operational again in 2026 with more of a public facing role. The work is taking longer due to it needing a new roof as the original lead one disappeared in the last couple of weeks...

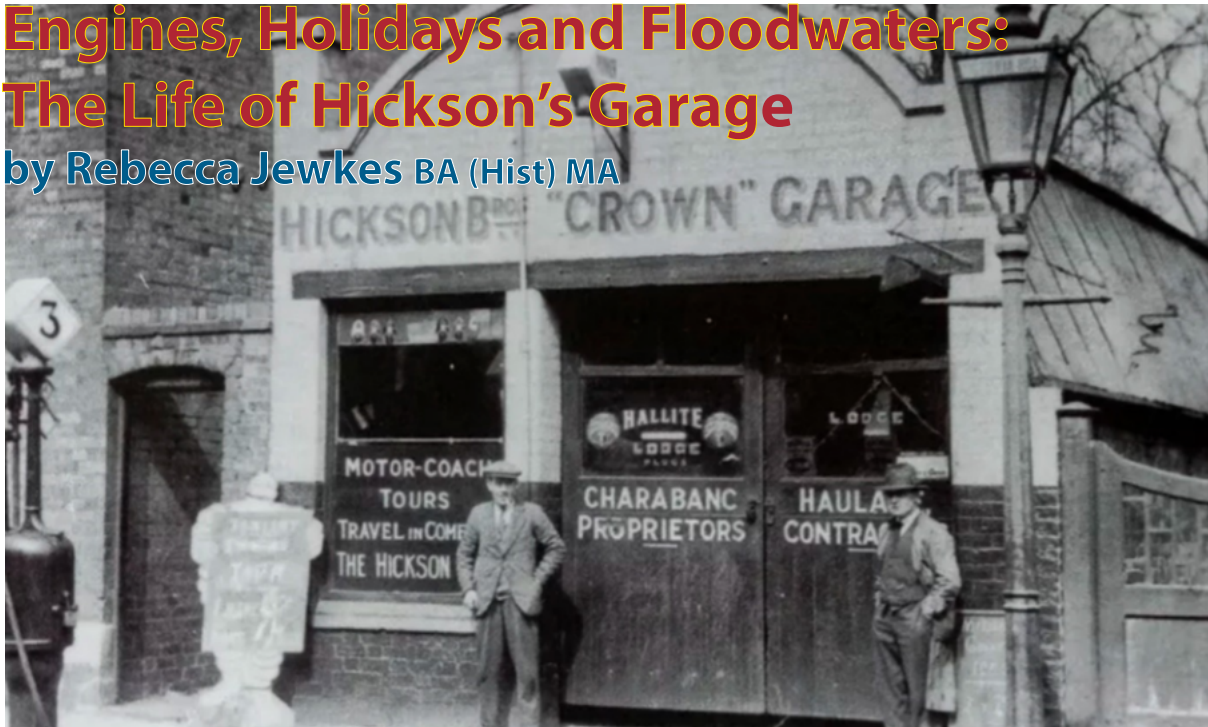


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Engines, Holidays and Floodwaters: The Life of Hickson's Garage

by Rebecca Jewkes BA (Hist) MA



On the corner where Bonehill Road meets Fazeley Road, just down from Lady Bridge, an empty forecourt lies silent. Once, the air here was thick with the smell of petrol and the hiss of tyres on wet tarmac, the sound of engines being coaxed back to life drifting from open workshop doors.

For decades, Hickson Bros. Crown Garage, later the Co-Op Garage and MOT Centre, was a familiar landmark for anyone passing in or out of town. Now (2025), it's been sold for offers over £750,000, as "development land with planning for 11 houses." Before the buildings are demolished and the site is reborn, it feels only right to look back at the garage's story and how it became part of the town's everyday life.



The original Hickson Bros. "Crown" Garage above

© Tamworth Digital archive

Below left The garage in August 2025 © JAMedia

Flooding

Flooding shaped the site long before a spanner was ever lifted here. On maps from the late 1800s to the early 1900s (National Library of Scotland (2025) [Sheet LIX.SW \(1947\)](#)), the land where the old Co-Op garage on Bonehill Road stands and the land adjacent to it, where Lime Tree Court is now, is depicted as being marshland.





Chippendale Place, by Jolly Sailor
 © Tamworth Digital Archive

This is not at all surprising when you consider the floods that have happened in the area over the years, namely in 1900 and in 1932, although there have been many smaller floods since then.

For instance, the flood that occurred on 22nd May 1932 affected many towns and was covered extensively in local newspapers. The month had been exceedingly dull and wet in England and Wales, with between 318-343% of rainfall being measured in Edgbaston and Derby. This caused the biggest flood in living memory as the rivers Tame and Anker burst their banks and caused

chaos around the town. The Herald (1932) reported on it saying, ‘the waters formed a strong current, swirling at bridges and “boiling up” at culverts. The rushing of the water created a noise resembling the incoming tide over the seashore’. Lady Meadow and the Bonehill and Fazeley Roads were under water and the flood rose quickly and consistently.

The article goes on to describe how if you were to travel into the town from Glascoate in the morning you could do this with ease but, by noon, the route back was submerged. The waters



Chippendale Place, 2025
 © Rebecca Jewkes

reportedly rose to three feet, with lower apartments being flooded, and furniture was seen floating in shop windows. This flood was judged as being worse than the 1900 flood as the flood level was 14 inches above the level on the river wall. The floods also caused damage to the Castle Pleasure Grounds which only opened the previous year amounting to around £200.

The Jolly Sailor, over the road from Hickson’s Bros. Crown Garage, suffered from the

EXTENSIVE FLOODS.

Motor Boat on Lady Meadow.

MILLS FLOODED.

The most extensive flood since the memorable inundation on December 31, 1900, occurred at Tamworth on Sunday. It followed torrential rain in the early hours of Saturday, and an intermittent downfall during the day, which was succeeded by further heavy rainstorms in the course of the night. The rivers Tame and Anker, and other streams and watercourses in the locality overflowed, involving thousands of acres of land, and extending over many of the roads. In a wide expanse of country in the flooded area, the waters formed a strong current, swirling at bridges and "boiling up" at culverts. The rushing of the water created a noise resembling the incoming tide over the seashore.

Tamworth and district received the full force of the flood. Viewed from Fazeley road, right and left, on Sunday morning, the meadows were entirely submerged, and the Bonehill and Fazeley roads from near the Jolly Sailor inn were flooded in long stretches. The flood continued to rise with remarkable rapidity, and as the day wore on assumed alarming proportions. Persons who had come into the town in the morning from the Glascoate side were able to do so without any inconvenience, but by noon when the time arrived for their return they were confronted with a problem by flood which had invaded Bolebridge street. Buses were brought into town from the north, and from

water, the goods had to be shifted a second time to ensure immunity from the flood. In the yard it was judged from the distance which the water reached that the flood was nine or ten inches higher than the 1900 visitation, while according to a mark on the river wall it was about fourteen inches above the level of that date.

Tamworth Gas Works was flooded. It was recorded that on December 31, 1900, the water was two feet deep in the works. On Sunday there was three feet six inches depth in the works, and about two feet in the office. Thirty to forty tons of coke were washed away, some being left after the water had subsided at the foot of the railway embankment. The road to Gas Lane was damaged. The engine and the retort houses contained water. The flood in the governor house got into the mains, and there was no supply of gas in the old part of the Borough on Sunday evening and Monday morning. In other areas supplied through the high pressure main gas was available. Water was pumped from the mains, and the supply was restored during Monday. A mark on the governor house wall indicating the height of a great flood in 1875, showed that Sunday's inundation was ten inches higher.

Damage to Pleasure Grounds.

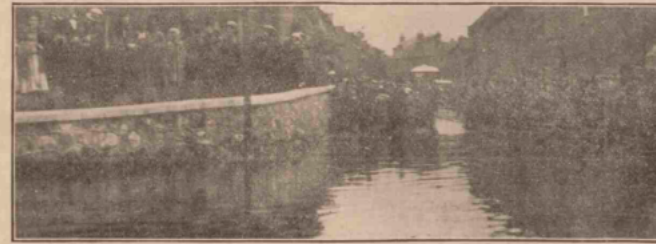
Much havoc was wrought by the flood in a portion of the new pleasure grounds at Tam-

THE FLOODS AT TAMWORTH.



NEAR THE KNOB, BOLEBRIDGE STREET.

[Photo: Messenger.]



KETTLEBROOK ROAD, NEAR RAILWAY ARCH LEADING TO GLASCOATE.

[Photo: Messenger.]

The Herald, Saturday May 28, 1932, p.3

flood water rushing into the cellar, where barrels were floating around, and chairs and tables being washed away from the garden. The tarmac was washed away from a part of the footpath on the Bonehill Road side of the building and rushed into the cottages adjacent to it, such as Chippendale Place, which was built in 1892 and suffered in the 1900 flood as well. This flood resulted in the council building flood defences in the town, although the adjacent Lady Meadow still floods regularly today.



Above flooded Tamworth
© Tamworth Digital Archive



Left: The building on the far left is the Garage which is, as of the 1st September 2025, still standing. The coach on Lady Bridge is probably one Hickson's
© Tamworth Digital Archive

Hicksons' History

The floods left their mark not only on the surrounding land but on the way the area developed. The Bonehill and Fazeley Roads, regularly tested by high waters, would later become home to one of Tamworth's most recognisable businesses.

In the 1920s, brothers Bertrum and William Hickson were pioneers of coach travel in Tamworth, starting a 'solid tyre' coach and haulage business. Alongside their haulage vehicles, they built up a fleet of luxury coaches. Bertrum, known as 'Bert', was the oldest brother and founder of the company.

Before the First World War, he ran a fruit and vegetable business in Bolebridge Street. On joining the Great War, he served in the Royal Army Service Corps and was awarded the Military Service Medal. Beyond his business and military life, Bert was a long-serving chorister at Tamworth Parish Church and spent 38 years as a member of the Board of Directors of the Tamworth Permanent Building Society. In his spare time, he was a keen canal cruiser, covering most of the Midland's waterways during his twenty years of boat ownership.

Bert's brother, William, known as 'Bill', was born in 1893 and also volunteered to fight for King and Country in 1916 at the age of 23. He was assigned to the Royal Field Artillery and later posted to France, serving with Alpha Battery, 187th Brigade, and seeing action in battles such as Arras and the Menin Road. He was also part of the advance through Flanders. Bill's conduct saw him rise quickly through the ranks to Sergeant, and he was later awarded the Military Medal for bravery.

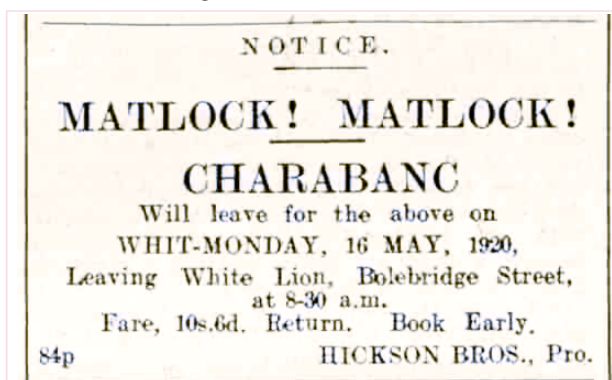
After the war, he served in the army of occupation in Germany before returning to Tamworth. On leaving the army, he joined the business founded by his brother Bert. Their younger brother, Albert, ran a separate coach and haulage business.



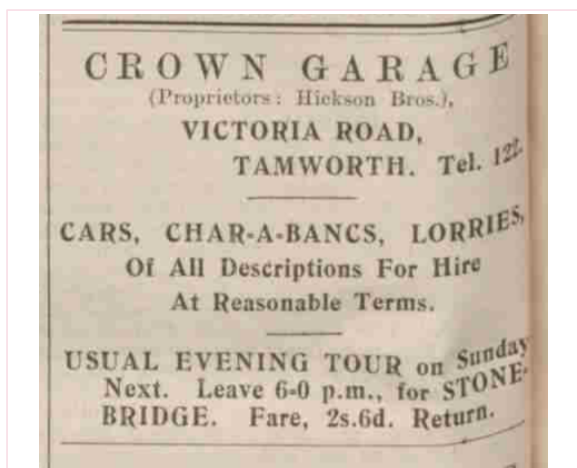
Left to right- Marion Hickson, Bertram Hickson, William Hickson, Beatrice Hickson and then Norman and Margaret Stephenson. . © Tamworth Digital Archive

During the Second World War, it was the brothers' business that was called upon to support the war effort. Their vehicles were often utilised for military service. Tragically, when the authorities commandeered two of their 48 to 50-seater Leyland Tiger coaches, the ship carrying them to the continent was torpedoed, sending their prized vehicles to the bottom of the sea.

It wasn't until 1936 that the site started to be advertised in local print, but the company's journey had started more than a decade earlier, where they were based at the White Lion Garage in Bolebridge Street, before moving briefly to The Crown Garage, Colehill in 1922.



The Herald. Saturday May 14, 1921.



The Herald, Saturday May 19, 1923.

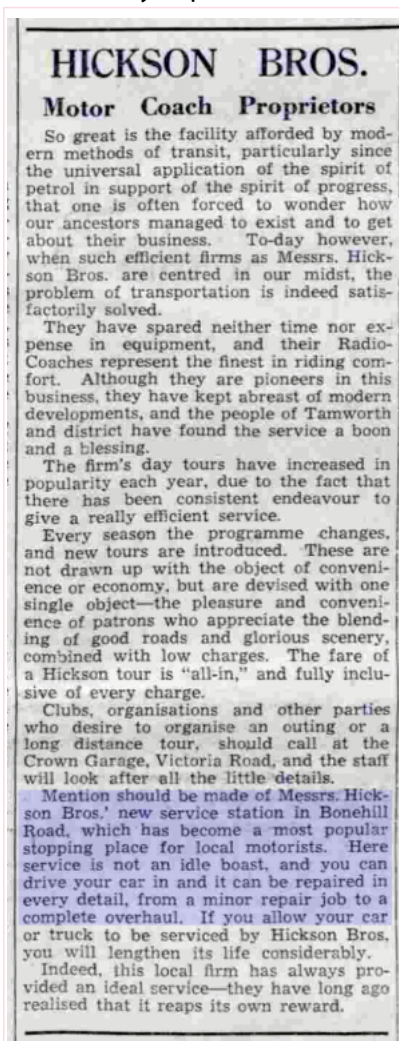


The Herald, Saturday August 6, 1932.

Adverts in the Tamworth Herald show that in 1923 they moved to Victoria Road, where they were located in an ex-World War One metal Royal Flying Corps. aeroplane hangar which was reassembled as a garage for Hickson's luxury coaches, and other cars for hire. Hickson's also used to have a fleet of milk tankers in the 1920s, which were some of the first in the area at the time.

The garage on the junction of the Bonehill and Fazeley Roads opened in 1936 as a service station. An advert for it in the Herald stated it had "...become a most popular stopping place for local motorists. Here service is not an idle boast, and you can drive your car in, and it can be repaired in every detail, from a minor repair job to a complete overhaul". Bert Hickson also owned the three cottages next to the garage which he later had knocked down to create more space for his haulage fleet such as Morris tip up lorries which

The Herald..
Saturday Sept 19th, 1936.



they contracted out to local coal merchants and other heavy good businesses in the area.

From their Victoria Road garage, they ran many trips throughout the 1920s and 1930s such as regular day trips and excursions to the coast, namely Blackpool, and to sporting events, as well as being available for private hire. For example, in the summer of 1932, they ran a weekly service between Tamworth and Blackpool, which left every Saturday for a fare of £1. In

November of the same year, they were also advertised as providing a return trip to the Aston Villa vs Blackpool football match for 2s., leaving from the garage.



The Herald, Saturday November 5, 1932.
[Aston Villa won 6-2](#)



Atherstone News and Herald. 7 October 1966.

Bert Hickson once recounted in the Atherstone News and Herald that, *"We travelled on a wing and a prayer in those days...The engine had to be carefully nursed every inch of the way. I remember coming back from Blackpool on one occasion with a broken fan and a damaged water pump"*.

That being said, for many, coach and charabanc trips like this were the only way their family could leave the town as rail fares could be expensive for the whole family and car ownership was scarce all the way up until the 1940s, and even then, many working-class families could not afford one.



This shows how pivotal the local company was to the leisure and sporting lives of the working-class families in the town.

By 1950, Blackpool weekly tickets were £1/3/3 return from the 1st July to the end of September. These fares range from being up to half of the worker's weekly wage in 1932, to being about a sixth in 1950, although many families would have saved up for their annual holiday.

Holidays for working class families

Hickson's coaches were part of a wider change within society at the time. From the early 1900s through to the 1950s, holidays for working-class families in Britain slowly became a more realistic prospect, though not without challenges. At the start of the century, most working people had very limited time off and even less disposable income for leisure travel. However, improvements in transport, especially the expansion of railway and coach networks, and the rise of seaside resorts created new opportunities for working families to take breaks away from industrial towns.

Blackpool was among the most popular destinations, growing from a modest fishing village in the 19th century to a bustling holiday hot spot by the early 1900s. Its rapid growth was helped by early investment in infrastructure, including the installation of electric street lighting in the 1880s, which made it one of the first towns to be brightly lit after dark¹.

This, combined with attractions like the Blackpool Tower and pleasure piers, helped draw millions of visitors from nearby industrial regions such as Staffordshire and the Midlands. Its accessibility via rail and later by coach services,

¹ Roberts, D. (2001). Blackpool: History and Heritage. [Amberley Publishing](#).

Hickson's Tour Coach
© Tamworth Digital Archive



which were often cheaper than train travel for groups, made it especially popular with working-class families seeking a day or week by the sea.

Affordability remained a major barrier, however. A holiday, even to a relatively close destination like Blackpool, could cost a significant portion of a worker's weekly wage once travel, accommodation, and food were factored in. In the 1930s, historians estimate that a week's holiday might cost around the equivalent of a full week's pay for a manual worker¹. To manage this, many families would save for months or rely on special excursion fares and coach trips arranged by local firms. The tradition of 'wake weeks', where factories or mills would close for a fixed period, also gave workers a guaranteed time off, encouraging group travel and seaside holidays.

The social landscape of holidays changed notably after the introduction of the Holidays with Pay Act in 1938. Although the Act did not impose mandatory paid leave, it encouraged employers to offer paid holidays, acknowledging the health benefits and social importance of rest

¹ [Walton, J. K. \(1983\). *The English Seaside Resort: A Social History 1750–1914*. Leicester University Press.](#)

for workers¹. This legislation was a vital stepping stone towards more widespread and reliable paid leave in the post-war years, making holidays less of a privilege and more of a right for many working families.

By the 1950s, rising wages, better working conditions, and affordable coach services meant seaside holidays were becoming a fixture of working-class life. Blackpool's popularity endured, offering entertainment and leisure that went beyond the beach itself, from theatres to amusement arcades, which appealed especially to families. This period saw the beginnings of mass tourism that would shape British holiday culture for decades. For many local families, those Blackpool trips were a highlight of the year and for some, the only time they saw the sea. Hickson's coaches were at the heart of this growing holiday culture, offering affordable and sociable travel that rail tickets often couldn't match. But as the decades rolled on, leisure travel became just one chapter in the company's story. Hickson's 1950s-2000s.

In the following decades, their coach trips decreased, and their business focused once again on haulage contracting and being a repair

¹ [Taylor, M. \(2006\). *The Politics of the Welfare State*. Pearson Education.](#)

garage. Over the years, it carried on being a mechanical garage and petrol station.

It was later run by Henry Porter and Mick Goodall, who served many of the town's children who would buy sweets and chocolates on their way through the town, and would serve drivers at the petrol pump. Lastly, it became the Co-Op MOT centre before it closed its doors for the final time.

In 2025 it now stands empty, overgrown and sold subject to contract, with the hopes that the land becomes home to many happy families.

This article is written with the intention of preserving the history of local businesses and their impact on the ordinary, working people of our town.

It's these small stories which help us to paint the picture of what once was, and how local businesses could help benefit everyone, even if that is just getting your car repaired or being able to go on your Summer holiday.



Hickson's Garage when the Co-OP
© Tamworth Digital Archive



Hickson's Garage when the Co-OP
© Tamworth Digital Archive

Hickson's Garage when the Co-OP
© Tamworth Digital Archive



If anyone has any more pictures of the Hickson Garages, particularly with people in them the Editor would love to see them.

We are building up an archive of images in a searchable database so even if the people in them can't be names now we may be able to add names later.

Please email the Editor at Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.UK

Hickson's Garage when the Co-OP

© Tamworth Digital Archive



Back wall of the Hickson's Garage workshop in August 2025 when the Co-OP © Tamworth Digital Archive

Not sure when the switch was last turned off but it will never go back on again. The end of an era.

© Tamworth Digital Archive



This season's significant dates and events

collated by The Editor



Monday 16 October - 74 years since Drayton Manor Theme Park opened!

Is anyone interested in writing an article on the 75 anniversary for the Magazine?

Wednesday 25 October - 169 years since Charge of the Light Brigade, and Private Samuel Parkes won the Victoria Cross. *This is another subject where an article for the Magazine would be appreciated by the team for the 170th anniversary.*

Monday 30 October 1942 - death of AB Colin Grazier retrieving Enigma code-books from U-559 in the Mediterranean.

Monday 30 October - 145 years since the company of Gibbs and Canning was incorporated.

Saturday 11 November - Armistice Day.

Sunday 12 November - Remembrance Sunday.

Saturday 2 December - Sixty years since the Rolling Stones perform at the Assembly Rooms.

A band which have probably given more 'farewell tours' than any other came to Tamworth on Monday 2 December 1963.

Tickets were purchased either on the door on the night or in advance from Weavers of Bolebridge Street. In 1963, the Rolling Stones played no less than 308 gigs, with Tamworth number 281. A contemporary report told of girls screaming as the green velvet curtains drew back at 8:52pm, and five young men – described as "having more hair than the Beatles ever did" – began to play. At that time the Beatles had released just two singles – *Come On* in June reached number 21, and *I Wanna Be Your Man* (written by Lennon and

McCartney) reached number 12 around Christmas this year. Judging by the start time, we must assume there was a support act (maybe two), but no record of who is known. What we do know is that the Stones had just finished (in early November) as part of the tour headed by the Everly Brothers, Bo Diddley, and Little Richard. Today, we see the list of acts playing on an event – often for a cost of a couple of shillings – and think how lucky that generation was. However, this tour saw the Rolling Stones play for no more than ten minutes (3 or 4 songs), and therefore those who saw Sir Michael Philip Jagger and company play in December '63 should think themselves very lucky.

Monday 18 December 1834 – Sir Robert Peel created the Tamworth Manifesto, a pre-election speech which laid out the principles of the Conservative Party. We would say more but Tamworth is in the midst of a historic By-Election

Wednesday 20 December - 18 years ago, the Bolebridge Egg is voted the 4th worst roundabout in the country.

The worst five traffic islands were:
Magic Roundabout in Swindon
The Plough in Hemel Hempstead
The Pork Pie in Leicester
The Bolebridge Egg in Tamworth
East of Tamar Bridge in Plymouth

Wednesday 27 December - 299 years since the death of Sir Thomas Guy, who started the internationally renowned Guy's Hospital in London. *Another subject for an article in the magazine?*

An Elford Childhood 1920-1933

Part 7: Elford Hall and the Last Squire

by Doris Buttery



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

Part 7 Elford Hall & the Last Squire

We still had a Squire living at the Hall in Elford ([Howard Francis Paget 1858-1935](#)). He seemed ancient to me, although I don't suppose he was much over sixty. He was tall, thin and impoverished. The entire village had once belonged to his family but gradually everything that was not entailed was sold off.

The property was disposed of with great reluctance, and the Squire still kept an eye on things, going out for a walk each day to inspect what had once been his birth right.

One of the first things Dad did on moving into our house was to cut down a large yew tree in the front garden. He felt it was dangerous with children around. The Squire stood and stared at the empty gap near the hedge but, of course, beyond making his feelings plain, by glowering, there was nothing he could do.

Dad later learned that no tree had previously ever been felled on the Squire's property except at his personal command.



Doris Helping her father in the Mill Cottage garden © Ann Nibbs

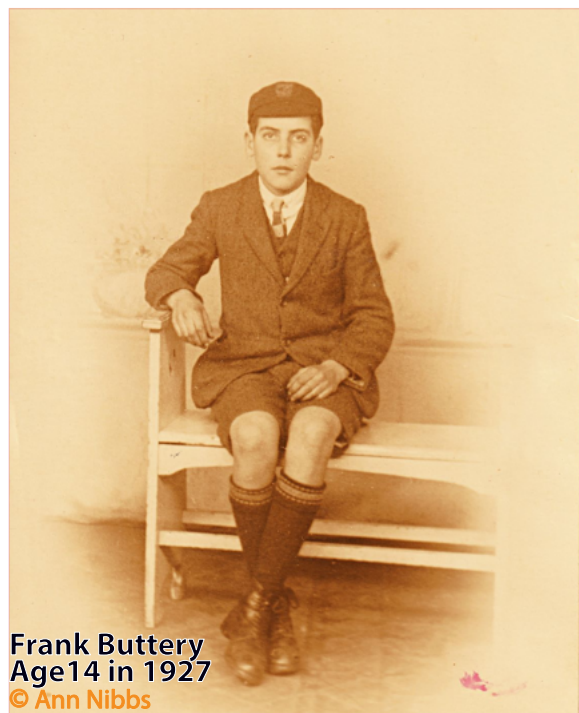
Each winter, the Squire and his lady ([Alice, 1863-1934](#)) went to Torquay for three months. Usually their daughter, [Charlotte](#), went too. She was the youngest, and only member of the family still at home. I don't remember her well, but Bill and Frank both knew her because when the rector started a Cub pack and Scout troop in the village, Miss Charlotte was the Akala.

The Scoutmaster was a young farmer [[Joseph Hodgetts](#)] and, as the two got to know each other better, their friendship turned to love. The Squire was furious when he heard of it and insisted on Charlotte giving up her Scout work.

Somehow or other, the two contrived to meet, and when the Squire discovered this, Charlotte was sent to stay with her brother in South Africa. She remained there for three years and, during all that time, she and her farmer sweetheart kept up a steady correspondence.

When she returned and found her father still refusing permission for her to marry, she and the young man eloped. They went to the West Country and were married by special licence by a clergyman friend of the family who, though very willing to perform the ceremony, insisted on Charlotte telephoning her father and telling him of her intentions in order to give him time to give his blessing.

The old Squire acknowledged his defeat, saying sadly, 'It wasn't money I wanted for my daughter. It was a name.'



Frank Buttery
Age 14 in 1927
© Ann Nibbs

Of course, the news went round the village like wild-fire, and everyone was enchanted with the romance. Much better than anything in Home Notes or Peg's Paper. *[if anyone has any information on "Home Notes" of Peg's Paper let the Editor know].*

Despite the Squire's misgivings, the marriage turned out well and Charlotte found no difficulty becoming an efficient farmer's wife. *[They went on to have two children [Mary](#) and [Harold](#) who lived into the 1930s EDITOR]*

The Squire's lady was a delightful person. I recall her dressed mostly in grey and violet colours with lots of velvet and chiffon.

Frank was often involved in mischievous goings-on in the village, and she called him 'the scamp'. She was fond of him because she said he could put on a look of such wide-eyed innocence that, until one got to know him, no one would imagine him capable of any misdemeanour. Mind you, as people got to know him even better, he was frequently suspected of pranks in which he had no hand.

There were several boys all about the same age at the village school. They must have been a great trial to the headmistress and one day she ordered three of them, including Frank, to stay behind after school to plant out some wallflowers in the school garden. I don't recall what the punishment was for, but they evidently felt a sense of injustice because they carefully planted all the wallflowers upside down, with the roots sticking up in the air. When she saw what they had done. Her face turned purple with fury, but she decided to get the rector to deal with them. As it was a church school, he was partly responsible for its smooth running.

It was through the rector that Mother got to learn of the upside-down wallflowers. He called on her after he had talked to the delinquents, and Mother said she thought he would never stop laughing. Of course, he had tried to show the boys the error of their ways, but it had not been easy for him, with his acute sense of the ridiculous. Needless to say, Mother did not tell Frank the rector was amused.

Once a year there was a Sale of Work at the Hall in aid of the [Society for the Propagation of the Gospel \(S.P.G.\)](#). Everyone in the village was expected to support it and usually did so. In school, the girls had sewn, embroidered and

knitted all year towards this event and the boys had been busy with woodwork. In addition, there were cakes from the Mothers Union, sweets, books and the inevitable bran tub.

Frank had threepence and I had one penny pocket money each week and we used to save some of it to spend at the sale. On this particular day, Mother had bought the iron holder that I had made, and the serviette ring and stool made by Frank, plus a framed photograph of the Hall and a jar of local honey.

The following day, the Squire's lady called on Mother and gave her a book called Sambo's Saturday Night (*please remember, this was long before attitudes - and language - became more enlightened - Ed.*). It was a thin paperback and she had been standing near the bookstall the previous afternoon when Frank had come up to look. He had picked up that particular book and enquired the price.

'Sixpence.' said the lady in charge.
'Oh,' said Frank, 'I've only got fourpence left,' and he went away, looking dejected.

The Squire's lady said the look of disappointment on his face had touched her so deeply that she had promptly bought the book herself and was now bringing it for him.

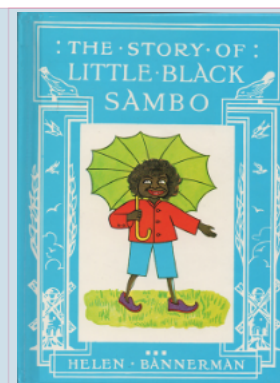
It was spontaneous acts of kindness like that which endeared her to everyone in the village. She delighted in knowing all the children by name and encouraged them to visit her.

Despite her elevated position in the village, she was far more approachable than some of the farmers' wives who had inflated ideas of their own importance as land-owning families and employers of labour. Furthermore, she was a much kinder employer. Her servants left only to get married, and those who grew old in her service were given rooms at the Hall in which to end their days. She really cared about people and was greatly loved in return.

The Squire and his lady died within a few months of each other, and the heir had little interest in the village. He had quarrelled with his father many years previously. walked out and had never returned to the Hall afterwards.

Rumour had it that he had been cut off without the proverbial shilling, but of course the old Squire could do nothing to prevent the title passing to the eldest son.

The Story of Little Black Sambo by Helen Bannerman is a children's book from 1899 that has sparked much controversy and conversation about racism in literature. While it was originally popular and well-intentioned, the illustrations and text contain offensive stereotypes by modern standards. The story was written during British rule in India and intended to educate English children about a different culture using imagination and fantasy. However, the book relies on stereotypes that are racist and harmful by today's standards. For the full history and modern perspective see [The History, Summary and Controversy of The Story of Little Black Sambo](#)



The new Squire had no intention of living in Elford and he could not sell the property, so he gave it away to the first big city who were prepared to accept it.

The village regretted it but there was no way of stopping it and thus another era ended. Forty years on, the Hall had fallen into decay and was demolished (**in 1964 - Ed.**)

Please note, the fate of Elford Hall is told here from Doris's perception, which seems to have been shared by many in the village at the time.

The Paget family account differs somewhat in the detail. The fundamental facts remain the same. The son and heir - Francis Howard Paget - did gift the Hall to the City of Birmingham who were poor custodians, allowing the Hall to fall into a state of dereliction, resulting in its demolition.

The gardens, however, have been rescued and restored by a group of hardworking, dedicated volunteers— The Elford Hall Garden Project <https://elfordhallgarden.org/>)

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.



Doorway to Tamworth

Where is this doorway in Tamworth? Each issue will feature a door in Tamworth town Centre. Some will be well known, some historic, some vaguely familiar. Some like this are a hidden gem that I suspect most readers will not have come across.



Last Issues Doorway:
30 Market Street, next to Tamworth Tap

Photo © Tamedia

How Tamworth Remembers those who served at War: Boer War

by The Editor and Sarah Williams

Tamworth Castle Museum Collections and Archives Officer



Boer War: First Contingent Tamworth Volunteers 1900-01
© Tamworth Digital Archive

Following on from the article in the last issue ([Vol3 I3 How Tamworth Remembers those who served at war](#)) where we asked if anyone had the three pictures from WW1 takes by the photographer Weale we were contacted by the Collections Officer at Tamworth Castle Museum to say they had some. But it was not that simple:

Dear Editor

Following on from your request for the war photos for the magazine, I came across a folder this week with these pages. I apologise for not finding them before, but they were labelled with the name of the person who donated the copy back in the early 2000's so it didn't pop up when I searched for the war images. I will rename it now!

If I remember rightly the booklet was in a bit of a mess, and there does seem to be a page missing. I believe it was scanned it and handed it back. If you wanted to use it as another follow up please do, as it gives far more detail than was on the photos I provided. I don't believe there will be any copyright issues.

I think people have confused these with WW1 images in the past. The only other images we have are of veterans seated in front of the bandstand in the Castle grounds. Those are hard copy photos in the filing cabinets in Marmion House. I don't have slide copies or scans of those.

Regards
Sarah

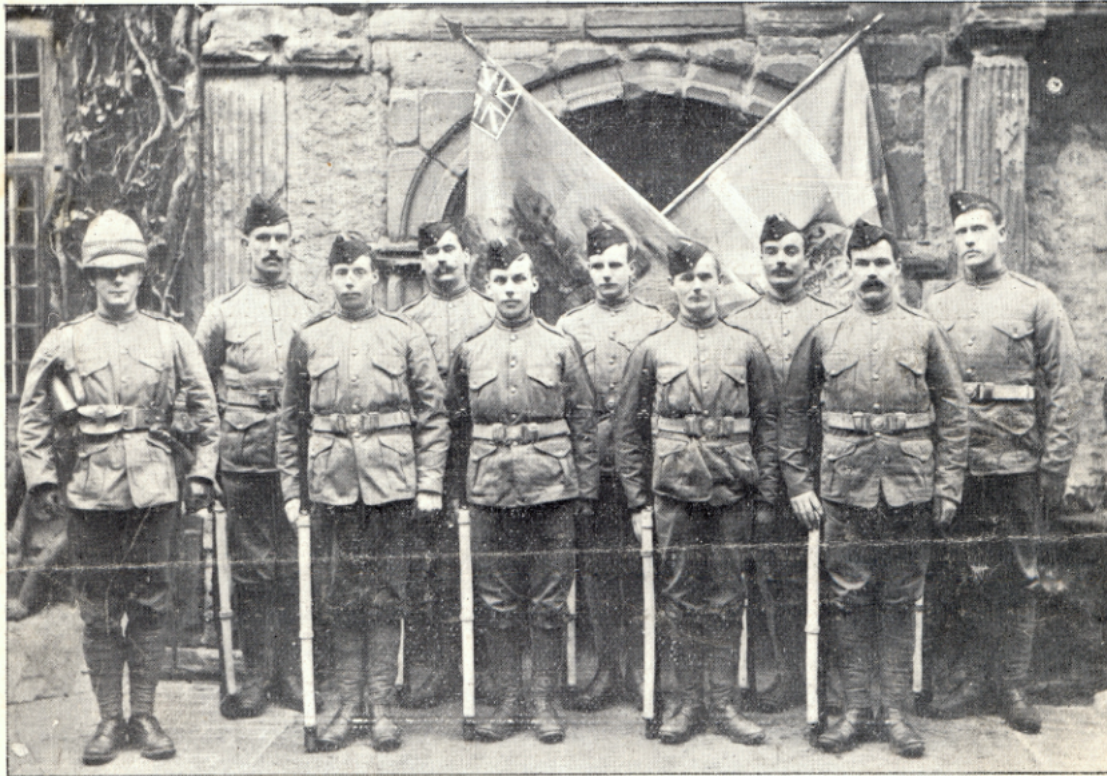
This is a leap forward as we now have the names to everyone in the both photos used in the last issue for the Boer War.

We are still looking for the WW1 images taken by Weale as and when the Castle Museum Archivist can get in to the filing cabinets to look, and scan them. This all takes time. Also your Editor happens to know that there are several boxes of Weal photos that were recently donated to the Castle Museum awaiting cataloguing and scanning. Again this will take time.

As the Castle Museum Archive uncovers any more information we will update these articles. In the mean time should anyone be related to any of the men in the pictures please contact the Editor. Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk

Men selected from C Company to form part of the North
Staffs. Vol. Company for active service in South Africa.

5 1 8 3 2



9 6 7 4

MOTTO: "Be strong, and of a good courage, be not afraid, neither be
dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

1.—Corporal John King, Clerk, Wilnecote, age 25. Joined Volunteers 26th March, 1892; made Corporal 31st December, 1896.

2.—Corporal Ernest Titterton, Potter's Contractor, Wilnecote, age 25. Joined Volunteers 20th December, 1890; joined Grenadier Guards 26th February, 1892; rejoined Volunteers 7th January, 1895; made Corporal 9th April, 1898.

3.—Lance-Corporal George Henry Keen, Plumber, Tamworth, age 23. Joined Volunteers 7th January, 1895; appointed Lance-Corporal 9th February, 1898.

4.—Private Samuel Vanes, Postman, Tamworth, age 28. Joined Volunteers 6th Feb., 1893. Previous to joining Volunteers Vanes was in the Lancashire Fusiliers three years, and has a Mounted Infantry Certificate.

5.—Private James Spooner, Miner, Amington, age 23. Joined Volunteers 22nd January, 1897.

6.—Private Thomas Parker, Potter, Wilnecote, age 21. Joined Volunteers 11th Jan., 1897.

7.—Private Richard Nash Pearson, Mining Engineer, Tamworth, age 21. Joined Volunteers 7th November, 1895.

8.—Private George Watts, Clerk in London and Midland Bank, Tamworth; lives at Cowes, Isle of Wight, age 21. Joined Volunteers 21st March, 1898.

9.—Private Thomas Harper, Miner, Amington, age 24. Joined Volunteers 4th November, 1895; resigned 31st December, 1898; re-joined for service in South Africa 21st December, 1899.

Image courtesy of Tamworth Castle Museum Archive

Looking at the picture to the left we see nine men and their officer. Only the men are named on the page. one being #2 Corporal Ernest Titterton aged 25. Perhaps a relative of Sir Ernest William Titterton professor of nuclear physics born in Bolehall in 1916 and who should have had been mentioned in "Oppenheimer" but wasn't. He is someone we will be devoting more than an article to in the future. As mentioned *if anyone is related to any of these soldiers the Editor would like to hear from you.*

The Officer as shown on the right is named elsewhere as 2nd Lieutenant E. T. Hodson who was granted a temporary rank in the Army. This indicates he was a civilian before this venture. Commissions are usually permanent but it appears all the officers in this group were temporary.

Also note the holster for his pistol is somewhat large. Research suggests these holsters were about 14 inches long and he would have carried the Webley Mk4 revolver in .455 calibre weighing in at 2.4 lb (1.1 kg), unloaded. Possibly he might have had the very new "broom-handle" Mauser C96 which many British Officers bought privately and was a similar weight to the Webley. The holster is high on the right as officers, and cavalry still carried swords on the left. It does appear that 2nd Lt. Hodson is carrying a sword on the left.

The Castle Museum Archive has made available the "booklet" which it says is a supplement which "We trust that it will be bound up with the Parish Magazine". As this booklet was lent and scanned prior to the current Archivist, over 20 years ago, there is little information about it. It is not known if it is complete though 8 pages would suggest 4 sheets of paper but there are no page numbers. The page edges and orientation suggests there are pages missing. One page says "D Smith, Printer, Tamworth".

The information we do have from the text is that this booklet was done in 1901 when the second contingent went out to South Africa in March. Working through the text it appears the first contingent went out at the end of February 1900.

The whole company was more than the ten in the photo from Tamworth comprising 1 Pay Sergeant, 4 Sergeants, 5 Corporals, 4 Lance Corporals, 2 Buglers, 98 Privates and 2 stretcher bearers.



The officers were:

Captain G. W. Laybourn Who was gazetted with his temporary rank on the 23rd February a mere week before departure.

Lieutenant H. Johnson granted Temporary rank as above.

2nd Lieutenant E.T. Hodson, in the photo above, with temporary rank as above.

In the past one could buy a commission but this was stopped in the 1871 some 25 years before the Boer War. So the Army when short of officers, principally in WW1 and WW2 awarded Temporary Commissions "for the duration". These officers were often referred to as "Temporary Gentlemen" from the phrase Officer and Gentlemen. This is from the days when a Gentleman was someone with private means who did not work for a living i.e. one of the gentry.

Part of the reason being that officers, even Temporary Officers had to buy their own uniforms and this would cost a minimum of £200 which is equivalent to £21,500 in 2025

The Prince of Wales' (North Staffordshire Regiment)
C Company 2nd Volunteer Battalion.

OFFICERS OF COMPANY :



Capt. G. R. Shaw.



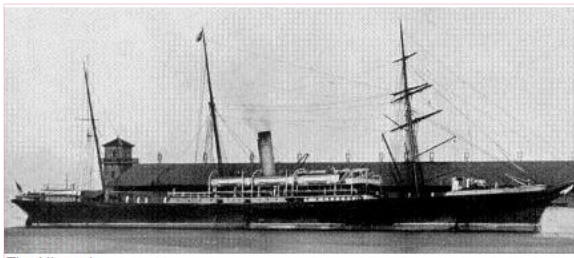
Lieut. W. Sydenham.

CAPTAIN GEORGE ROBERT SHAW, Commanding the Tamworth, or C Company, it is almost needless to say, is the son of the late Mr. John Shaw, of The Alders. He joined the Company on 16th April, 1875; received a Commission as Lieutenant 29th October, 1881; retired in September, 1889, on going to South Africa; re-joined as Lieutenant 16th April, 1898, and was promoted to his Company 23rd November, 1898.

SECOND LIEUTENANT WILLIAM SYDENHAM, the son of Mr. William Sydenham, of Bolehall House, was appointed second Lieutenant, and posted to C Company on 22nd December, 1898. He obtained his Proficiency Certificate, after a month's training at Whittington Barracks, on 19th July, 1899.



Image courtesy of [Tamworth Castle Museum Archive](#)



The Nineveh

They arrived in Cape Town on the SS Nineveh on the 24th March 1900 but were kept on board until the 31st March when they transferred to the SS Cephalonia sailing via Port Elizabeth to East London in the East Cape arriving on the 3rd of April 1900.

Much of the following it is claimed comes from the letters of Lance Corporal G Keen to his parents in Tamworth.

By 7th April They were in Burghersdorp moving on to Bethulie by the 16th. This is where they were tasked with guarding the Bethulie Bridge and holding associated outposts in time to hear of the relief of Mafeking. The following month, on 7th May, they started some long marches with short rations, several times coming under fire. They moved from Brentford to Sand River before taking a convoy to Kroonstad when they joined the regular battalion of the North Staffords. On the 27th May, with the Staffords, they crossed the

Vaal River uncontested.

They were also In Johannesburg when it was captured and marched in the parade for Lord Roberts in early June. They remained there until October doing general garrison duties where it is reported they had "a very fair time of it" though it is noted some of the men were involved in action early September at Jackfontin suffering no casualties but "Corporal Titterton had a mauser bullet through his helmet, which was close enough to be unpleasant"

They also formed a flying column which moved from Pretoria to drive the Boers out of Rustenberg as the Boers had recaptured it, though it was recaptured without a fight. So the company were back in Johannesburg for the 7th October where they were then given orders to move to Bloemfontein en route for England. There was much rejoicing at the thought of spending Christmas at home.

They travelled from the 13th to 18th via Bloemfontin and Norvals Pont. However there was great disappointment when on the 3rd of November the movement order was cancelled due to renewed enemy activity. It became clear that they would not be returning to Tamworth until a replacement unit arrived from England. They finally returned on the 17th May 1901.

The Second detachment March 1901

Given the cancellation of the homeward movement order for the Tamworth men in November 1900 a replacement unit was organised. We can't really say "swiftly" as it was over 4 months before the replacements set sail on the SS Montrose on 16th March 1901.

As the booklet says this was 13 months after the first detachment, so what was probably supposed to have been a 6 month deployment

SS Montrose



ended up as a 1 year deployment due to the enemy not keeping to the plan? As anyone who has served will know the enemy have a habit of not cooperating in plans.

From the loose pages of the booklet it appears that Captain Robert Shaw and Lieutenant Sydenham were the officers for this second group. See page opposite, they appear to be local Tamworth people. Especially as it says [Captain Shaw]"it is almost needless to say, is the son of the late Mr John Shaw of The Alders." Though I note he appears to have lived in South Africa for the previous decade from 1889. Returning to the colours when, I assume, his new home was threatened by the Boers.

Whilst 2nd Lt Sydenham is the son of Mr W Sydenham of Bolehall House which still stands in Tamworth in 2025, externally , at least, looking much as it would have in 1901.

North Stafford Volunteer Service Company.

8 10 6 9



1 4 3 5 2 7

CAPTAIN C. E. BOOTE, of "The Brampton," Newcastle, Staffordshire.

Gazetted Captain of G Stafford Company 23rd November, 1898; Lieutenant 13th February, 1895.

1. 2628. **Sergeant Instructor Samuel Pownell** came to Tamworth C Company 16th January, 1896, as Instructor from 98th North Staffs. Regt., and is going out with the Volunteer Service Company as Color Sergeant.
2. 7319. **Private Alfred Claridge**, joined 28th January, 1898.
3. 7316. **Private John Dickinson**, joined 2nd February, 1896.
4. 7331. **Private William Harvey**, joined 10th January, 1899.
5. 7317. **Private William Hinchliffe**, joined 7th December, 1891.
6. 7348. **Private Herbert Johnson**, joined 20th January, 1899.
7. 7359. **Private George Norton**, joined 19th March, 1900.
8. 7313. **Private Albert Roberts**, joined 20th January, 1898.
9. 7318. **Private Charles Storer**, joined 28th January, 1898.
10. 7315. **Private Albert Henry Weale**, joined 21st December, 1899.

Image courtesy of Tamworth Castle Museum Archive

The group photo of the men on the page to the left also includes Captain Boote from Newcastle under Lyme. Not local to Tamworth but still Staffordshire.

I note that all three officers have more military experience than the previous set sent the year before out with Temporary commissions less than a month old. In deed Captain Shaw initially enlisted in April 1875, was commissioned on the 29th October 1881 and retired in September 1889 when he went to South Africa. He seems to have re-joined 9 years later and was promoted Captain in November 1898. With some 15 years military experience and nearly a decade local knowledge in South Africa

Captain Boote held a commission from 1895 giving some 6 years experience and even the junior 2nd Lt Sydenham had held his commission for 2 years before this deployment.

Of more interest to most will be the men, with local family names. Your editor would like to hear from anyone who recognises a relative. As with the first group these men have a couple of years' experience with the exception of Private A.H. Weale who would later become Mayor of Tamworth as his official portrait from 1933 shows. He joined up three months before leaving for South Africa and a live war.



Which Weale? A framed copy of the first 1900 deployment has "Weale" on it as the photographer. Now this could have been taken by A H Weale, his father was blind at this point and his older brother C E Weale, also a photographer, had died 10 years before.

Which Weale? A framed copy of the first 1900 deployment has "Weale" on it as the photographer. Now this could have been taken by AH Weale, his father was blind at this point and his older brother C E Weale, also a photographer, had died 10 years before. So who took the 1901 photo with AH in it? In the 1901 census it is noted AH's sisters Maud & Agnes are assistant photographers. So we suspect that Maud or Agnes took the photo.

After WW1 at the conclusion of the presentation ceremony to the troops who returned, *all the guests were photographed in three groups by Mr Weale of Tamworth*, the same man in position 10 in the photo on the previous page, who was issued with a silver beaker in 1902 on his return from the Boer War as we covered in the last Issue. We are still searching for those three photos. If anyone has them or knows where they are please contact the Editor.

That said if anyone knows any of the history and in particular the families of:

Colour Sergeant S Pownell; Privates W Harvey, J Dickenson, W Hinchcliffe, A Claridge, C Norton, A Roberts, A H Weale, H Johnson, C Storer and Captain C E Boote let us know. Or for that matter any of the 10 who went out in the first detachment. All the men returned

The Boer war at the end of the 1800s was one of the earliest wars where photography was practical. So we hope that we can build up their stories but it depends on relatives and friends, or anyone with information or images, contacting the editor and filling in the blanks. Contact the Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk



Volunteers wanted: THM needs you!



Volunteers wanted: THM needs you!

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

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

The current team ranges from their 20s to 60s. Basic skills needed are being computer literate. We are happy to utilise whatever skills you can offer. We can also provide training sessions and we have access to half day courses, which we encourage team members to take. New skills are often learned on the job.

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

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

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

Contact Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk

Come and Join the Team!





The Mercian Flag by Margaret Jones

The Mercian flag was registered with the Flag Institute in 2014. It features a background of blue/azure with a saltire (like Scotland's St Andrew's cross) coloured yellow/gold. It is also known as the St Albans cross, as explained below. The problem with the Mercian flag is that Mercia came and went in a period before heraldry existed.

So whilst we have a Mercian Flag now it is unlikely to have been used by the kingdom of Mercia in the same way, if at all. Indeed the first references are from the 1300s some 700 years after the kingdom of Mercia came into being and over 300 since its demise as separate kingdom.

So how did the Mercian flag we see today come into being?



Historical background

After the Romans left Britain (the land they called Brittania) in the 5th century CE, the area which became Mercia was settled by people called the Angles from northern Germany, while Saxons from other areas of Germany settled further south (for example the West Saxons in Wessex, South Saxons in Sussex, the East Saxons in Essex).

Other Angles settled in East Anglia (hence its name) and Northumbria, with a tribe called Jutes in Kent.

The kingdom of Mercia was named for the "boundary folk" (Mierce) as it formed a boundary with the former inhabitants, the Celts, many having relocated westwards to what is now Wales.

Archaeological evidence indicates that the first Anglian settlements appeared in the valley of the River Trent and its tributaries. Mercia became one of several small kingdoms in present day England by around 650, eventually forming part of the Heptarchy (the seven Anglo/Saxon kingdoms) and becoming for a time the most dominant kingdom.



established as buildings were made of wood at that time which has left little or no trace under more modern buildings.

Charters show that Mercian royal families celebrated both Easter and Christmas at Tamworth regularly between 751 and 857, staying here far more than their palaces in other parts of Mercia.

After Offa died Mercia gradually declined as Wessex grew stronger. It also suffered from the Danish (Viking) attacks of the later 9th century, and in 874 Tamworth was attacked and destroyed. From 877 Mercia was divided into an English and a Danish area and it lost power between the Danes, who had settled to the north, and the Saxon kingdoms to the south.

A notable 10th ruler was Aethelflaed (Lady of the Mercians) daughter of King Alfred, who fortified Tamworth to resist the Danes.

Aethelflaed (Lady of the Mercians)

As it grew in importance Mercia eventually came to mean the area within the frontiers of Wales, the River Humber, East Anglia, and the River Thames.

From the mid seventh to early ninth centuries, Mercia was the leading power of the Angle and Saxon kingdoms. Among various notable kings a particularly strong ruler of Mercia was Offa (who ruled 757 to 796) and it is thought that he used Tamworth as his capital. He is known for the dyke that bears his name which was built along stretches of the western border of Mercia to create a boundary with Wales. He ruled most of the country from the Humber to the English Channel and is the first king to have been called King of the English.

It is believed that Tamworth was the main royal and administrative centre of the Mercian kings. A defensive burgh (stronghold) was built and Tamworth had a major royal residence or palace, although its exact location has not yet been



She was unusual for her time in being a strong powerful female ruler on behalf of her husband who was infirm for many years and after his death on behalf of her Brother the King of Wessex. After her death Mercia became an earldom governed by the Wessex kings. King Aethelstan of Wessex defeated the Danes and united the Anglo Saxon kingdoms.

After the Norman invasion in 1066 the feudal system and Norman system of government was introduced by the Norman kings and so Mercia ceased to exist.

Mercia had extended over the English Midlands, south of the Humber, and the term 'mercii' continued to describe people of that region well into medieval times. In 1387, for example, the cleric and translator John Trevisa (c. 1342–1402) wrote about the 'Mericii, that beeth men of myddel Engeland'.

Early use of the Design

As we have seen, there is no record of a Mercian flag from the Mercian era. However a saltire was the heraldic emblem attributed to the Anglo-Saxon Kingdom of Mercia by the College of Arms Ms. L.14, dating from the reign of Henry III (d. 1272). It is thought that medieval heralds attributed coats of arms to the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, often based on local traditions, and they ascribed to Mercia a gold diagonal saltire, on a blue field.

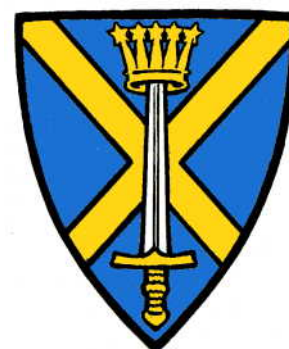
These arms were also used by the Abbey of St Albans after King Offa dedicated a monastery to the martyred Saint Alban in 793 CE.

Much of what is known is due to William of Malmesbury (c. 1095 – c. 1143) a monk who was also a great historian and wrote at length most of what we know of the period, though he was writing over 100 years after the end of Mercia. He also made links between Mercia and St Albans. Like Tamworth St Albans was on the edge of Mercia. Tamworth was a "border town" and some times in under DaneLaw. All the borders on the north east of Mercia ebbed and flowed.

When the St Albans monastery was dissolved during the reign of Henry VI these symbols became the arms of the town of St Albans (named after the saint). The modern Mercian flag uses a darker blue to differentiate it from the St Albans flag.



Above, St Alban and below various crests from the town of St Albans in modern day Hertfordshire,

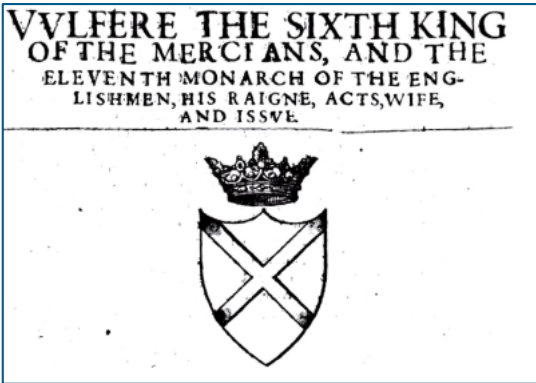


Earliest historic references

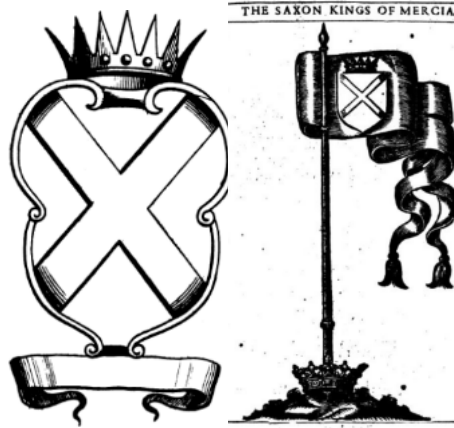
A similar symbol was used by the C17th cartographer (map maker) John Speed (1552—1629). This appears in John Speed's 1610/11 atlas of Great Britain ("The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine") and it can be seen on the title page.

It is also depicted in his 1611 (reprinted 1623) work, "History Of Great Britaine". It is thought that John Speed's source for the blue shield with a gold diagonal cross or saltire) may have been a chart of heraldic designs from Ms (Manuscript) L.14 by the College of Arms, . It also appears in banner form

It is also depicted in his 1611 (reprinted 1623) work, "History Of Great Britaine". It is thought that John Speed's source for the blue



shield with a gold diagonal cross or saltire) may have been a chart of heraldic designs from Ms (Manuscript) L.14 by the College of Arms. It also appears in banner form



The saltire also featured as the emblem of the Kingdom of Mercia in "Divi Britannici" by Sir Winston Churchill (the C20th Churchill's ancestor), published in 1675.

The C17th Jacobites also used the flag to seek the protection of St Alban, but had no connection to Mercia.



Current uses of the Mercian flag and emblem

The Mercian flag is currently flown frequently from Tamworth Castle, in rotation with other flags such as Union Flag, England Flag, and the locally significant the banners for Ferres, Marmion, former lords of Tamworth. The Mercian flag was also flown outside Birmingham Council House during 2009 while the Staffordshire Hoard (Mercia's greatest treasure trove) was on display in the city. This emblem appears in the coat of arms of Tamworth Borough Council.

Under current Staffordshire County Council rules in 2025/6 the Staffordshire County Council can not fly the Mercian flag on any County Council buildings.

The Mercian flag or emblem can be seen on road signs when entering the town. Other users of the flag include Tamworth Football Club, Midlands Rugby League. It has also been used in the coats of arms of other Mercian towns, such as Leek and Blaby.



The crests of Blaby (left) and Leek (right)



Other symbols used for Mercia

The following were not used in the Mercian flag itself and there is no historical record indicating if or when they were used as symbols to denote Mercia during its history:

A silver double-headed eagle with a golden three-pronged Saxon crown has been used by the Mercian Volunteers and later by the Mercian Regiment. It is thought to refer to the 11th century heraldic arms of Leofric, Earl of Mercia.



Mercian Regiment



The Queen's Own Mercian Yeomanry

Wyrm, a serpent like creature with no limbs, (wyrm is a word from Old English which also developed into the word worm) is referred to in Bram Stoker's 1911 novel *"The Lair of the White Worm" which was set in Mercia*.

Wyvern, a dragon-like creature with two legs and two wings (wyvern is a word derived from Old English wivere, meaning viper or serpent). The wyvern was used as an emblem by the Midland Railway in the mid-19th century, although it was later argued it had no connection with Mercia. It has been suggested instead that it was an emblem of Wessex.



Mercian Lancashire Yeomanry

Wyrmes and wyverns are mythical creatures which have featured in mythology, literature and folklore of various cultures around the world for hundreds of years. Folk tales featuring these may have been brought to Britain by the early settlers from Germany, but this could just be conjecture! Whatever their origin, various groups and organisations named after Mercia in recent times have used these as a symbol.



Wessex Regiment (Wyvern)



Midland Railway (Wyrm)



Independent Mercia (Wyrm)

<https://www.independentmercia.org/>



Technical Specification

Flag Type:	Regional Flag
Flag Date:	C8th-C17th
Flag Designer:	Traditional
Adoption Route:	Traditional
Aspect Ratio:	3:5
Pantone® Colours:	Blue 280, Yellow 109
Certification:	Flag Institute Chief Vexillologist

Links and further reading

<https://www.flaginstitute.org/wp/flags/mercia-flag/>

<https://historywm.com/direct/e06-rise-and-fall-kingdom-of-mercia-18873.pdf>

<https://britishcountyflags.com/2013/04/08/mercia-flag/>

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Offa-Anglo-Saxon-king>

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Mercia>

<https://www.tamworthcastle.co.uk/history>

<https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofEngland/Aethelflaed-Lady-of-the-Mercians/>

Tamworth Castle Flags

Below is the Official List of Flags flown on Tamworth Castle from their flag exhibition in the Castle.

However others are flown throughout the year. For example the Armed Forces flag, the White Ensign (Royal Navy), the RAF and Army flags.

The Staffordshire County Flag can also be flown, but not the County Council Banner. During celebrations other flags have been flown such as the Pride flag and those of other nations as an act of solidarity.

When there are visiting dignitaries such as members of the Royal family their standards may be flown *when they are actually at the castle*. Rules of flags and protocol get complex and often date back 100s of years.

This poster arrived only hours before we published this issue of the magazine, in response to a last minute question. It has raised as many questions as it answered. However as we had an odd page spare we decided to include it and will follow it up with a longer and more complete article.

With a change in Council structure looking it should be mentioned this is not the first time and there are two flags shown from previous incarnations of Tamworth Borough. One being the "Seal of the *Burgh of Tamworth in the county of Warwick and Staffordshire*"

At times Tamworth would have flown Warwickshire flags...

Our Flags

Have you ever wondered what flags are flown on Tamworth Castle? Here are a selection of flags that can be seen at the top of the tower.

- Mercian Flag.** Tamworth was the capital of The Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia 527-918.
- Marmion Flag.** The Marmion Flag featuring a blue "vair" design with silver. The Marmions were owners of Tamworth Castle from c1101 to 1291.
- Ferrers Flag.** This family were responsible for transforming the castle from a fortress to a grand home from 1418 to 1688.
- Tamworth Borough Seal Flag.** This is the ancient seal of the Borough of Tamworth.
- An older version of the flag above.** It reads: Sic Bvrgi de Tamworth in Comitatu Warwic et staf Which translates as: " seal of the Burgh of Tamworth in the county of Warwick and Staffordshire"
- Tamworth Borough Flag.** The Borough flag is a rectangular version of the shield on the Tamworth Coat of Arms and is flown whenever the Mayor of Tamworth is in the Castle.
- Tamworth in Bloom.** Tamworth has entered the Heart of England in Bloom for the 'Small City' category for many years. As of 2019, Tamworth has won the Gold award 10 years in a row!
- Union Jack Flag.** The Union Jack is flown on royal birthdays and national events. It is called the Union Flag because it symbolises the union of the countries of the United Kingdom. It is made up of the individual flags of England, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- St George's Flag.** St George flag is flown on St George's day (23rd April). In 1194 A.D King Richard I of England introduced the Cross of St. George, a red cross on a white ground, as the National Flag of England.
- Merchant Navy Flag, or the Red Ensign.** This is flag is not usually flown on land and instead flown by the merchant navy and civilian ships. Tamworth Castle is proud to fly the Red Ensign for Merchant Navy day on the 3rd September.
- Commonwealth flag.** The Commonwealth of Nations has 54 member states around the world and is headed by Queen Elizabeth II. The globe on the flag represents the global nature of the Commonwealth and the breadth of its membership.

Can you figure out which flag is not in the room and therefore flying on our flag pole?

Book Review

The Mercian Chronicles: King Offa and the birth of the Anglo-Saxon state, AD 630-918

Max Adams

Published Apollo/Head of Zeus 2025

ISBN 978-1-838-93325-8

Hardback 438 pages

16.2cm by 23.5cm by 4.6cm

This book is like a three act novel. The rise, the golden age and the decline of Mercia covering 630 to 918CE this was a pivotal time in British history between the vacuum left by the Romans from about 400CE and consolidation of Athelstan's (Wessex) England in 924CE.

Critics might note the first use of Mercia was around 585 but one mention does not a kingdom make. Adams does peer in the mist of the 40 years before the official 630 start date of the book in the introduction but it is more in passing. The author is a historian and an archaeologist who has written several books on first millennium Britain including one on the gap between the Romans and Mercia (the [First Kingdom, Britain in the age of Arthur](#)) for those who want to see the prequel. The problem is these lines are between ages can be fuzzy and the alternative would be to have a single book twice the size.

All Adams' books are well researched, and more readable than some academic books. As mentioned he is both an archaeologist and a historian which in an age of more archaeology than written history is a good thing, especially as archaeology has moved on in leaps and bounds in the last few decades. This is important as the source documents tend to have been written several 100 years after the events.

The important parts of this book are the intangibles. We know of Offa's Dyke but Adams looks at the more important things like the statesmanship and the politics. This tends to be forgotten even though it is as significant as the battles. Like the Church politics, the use of coins and other forms of soft power on many levels, things that lasted longer than the kingdom of



Mercia. Even books on Athelstan look back to things and influences he used from Mercia. Though, some things came through Mercia, from the Romans, 400 years before.

Whilst the book ends at 918 the death of Aethelflaed, Mercia actually faded in power if not name or influence of ideas when King Aethelred became ill around 902 and Aethelflaed, sister of the King of Wessex and increasingly, his first son, Aethelstan, ran Mercia as a Wessex annex. As mentioned start and end dates are at best fuzzy.

Overall this is an essential and readable book with a lot of insight in to how Mercia worked and what its legacy was written by someone who understands the history from before to after and can put it in context. If you grab the prequel you have the entire picture from the Romans fading out to the start England. Looking at the dates of the two books 2021 and 2025 you can see they were written as a pair.

There is more information on the Authors Web site on this and his other books. [Click Here.](#)

Letters to the Editor



Church street © Tamworth Digital Archive

Dear Editor

I have just stumbled across a great photo from the "Tamworth U.K. area history and reminiscences" Facebook group, it was of a couple of old shops, Pauline's & Christine's stores, a third sister Monica ran a café I gathered that information from a comment on the photo.

Regards

Jill

Editor: Does any one have any information on the sisters Monica, Pauline and Christine or their family? Are any of the family still in Tamworth? It



Church street © Tamworth Digital Archive

would be quite a family to start three shops in the same street. Pauline's and Christine's shops were demolished when St Edithas Square was built. The Monica's Cafe building is still there but not as Monica's. So any information on the family, or the shops please contact the editor so we can fill in the blanks Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk



Church street © Tamworth Digital Archive

Dear Editor

When you see someone more knowledgeable about Drayton Manor than us, any old archivist will do, ask them if they are aware of a gentleman by the name of HARRINGTON GIDDINS.

He worked or was associated with the Peel's of Drayton Manor, we know this as we have a half hunter watch in 18 carrot gold that is engraved on the inside as follows: *Harrington Giddins in remembrance of twenty years of valuable and loyal service Emily Peel* and the dates engraved on the opposite side are the two dates 1878 to



1898. I have tried to find him on 'ancestry' but have had no luck. If you or anyone can help, we would be extremely grateful.
Cheers, Roger

Editor: Does any one have any information Harrington Giddins? Multiple people have looked and can find no one with that name anywhere. The watch has been assessed as being a mas produced watch of the period. It has no obvious makers name.

The key seems to be Emily Peel and the dates 1878 to 1898. Was Harrington a servant from her own (parents) family who came to Drayton Manor? Was he some one she found whilst on the Grand Tour or living in London or Italy? No one seems to know. Not just where he came from but where he went too after. If you have any information, or just an idea contact the Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk

Before anyone suggests asking the Peel Society, it is they who are asking! They have no idea when or how the watch came into the Peel Society's collection nor where from! They just found it in a box. Provenance and records are everything when you hold a collection or archive.



Dear Editor

I was very interested in the article about the banners discovered in Fazeley Methodist church as my father was Joe Hunter. I still have the original cutting from the Tamworth Herald somewhere. When my father passed away, I asked the Methodist minister at the time, Tim Flowers if he knew where the banners were. He said he thought they were at Stoke on Trent (I assumed that was some sort of Methodist archive), so I was delighted to hear that they have found their way to Tamworth Castle.

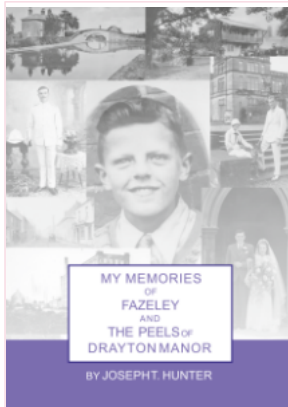
I don't know if it could ever be arranged for me to see them, I didn't see them at the time, I suppose I was of an age not to be interested.

Regarding my father's book, he wrote it out in longhand and I typed it out and put it on a disc to take to the printers. The illustrations in the book are from my postcard collection. I do have a spare copy if you would like one, feel free to get in touch.

Regards Jean

EDITOR: Thanks for the information. As the article said the owner thought, for over 25 years, that they were Trade Union Banners, he had no idea they were Methodist Banners. It seems the Methodists thought they were in Stoke on Trent. This is how things (like the Emily Peel pocket watch) get lost and forgotten about. I am glad we have now unearthed them and they are in a safe place.

They are now in the Tamworth Castle Museum Archive. Not Tamworth Castle as such. They will need a lot of restoration work. Fortunately as they had been rolled tightly and stored in a dark place there has been no fading and only damage to the outer fringes. They are awaiting restoration. There is a long list of things in the archive that need restoration work, which in itself is slow and painstaking. So they won't be view-able by the public for some time (probably a few years).



Regarding the Joe Hunter book about Fazeley and Drayton Manor: The Editor now has a copy and the original electronic files. We will be producing a new version as a THM Special so anyone interested will be able to download it.

Dear Editor

Congratulations on another fascinating issue. If Mum was still alive, she could add her recollections of her time in the ATS during the war. She served all through, having volunteered before war was declared and she rose to the rank of Staff Sergeant. She was stationed at Whittington Barracks, Donington and, subsequently, Lancaster. The North Staffords was her regiment so she wore the Staffordshire knot on her uniform.



I have her badges, along with her sergeant stripes, buttons, medals and a large collection of cap badges from many other regiments as well as other memorabilia that she kept.

I also have some notes she wrote on her time during the war which I need to transcribe. They are not nearly as extensive as her Elford Childhood story though.

Many thanks and best wishes
Ann

EDITOR Thanks for the kind words Ann. We still have a few more chapters of an Elford Childhood left to go but we would love to have the your mothers war time notes.*

We would also like any recollections from anyone else with recollections of Elford. As Ann has mentioned several times: these are Doris's recollections and others may have a different (but equally valid) view of events.

**We have another short series to follow on from Doris' tales of Elford but will be happy to serialise any other relevant book. Authors get in touch with the Editor.*

Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk

EDITOR After the article in the last issue (Vol 3 Issue 3) about Tamworth welcoming troops back from war the Editor contacted Vaughtons who produced the silver medal after WW1 for the Wilnecote troops. This was the response from their in-house historian.

Dear Editor

Thank you for your phone call and email. It is indeed an interesting story. The magazine looks great. Thank you for the addition of the link.

Having had a look, we have no paperwork nor any dies relating to this medal. Much of our historic dies and paperwork were destroyed (probably to make room) in the years following WW2, although the 1908 Olympics dies do survive.

Something as official as this will likely have been ordered by the local government authority, Parish Council or a special committee of locals. I suspect, as so much was back then, it was funded by generous subscription of locals or one or two big benefactors. Knowing the characteristic generosity of Vaughtons, I suspect they were sold at a fair or break-even cost – to honour the returning men.

I can only make wild guesses as to how much it cost at the time. It may be best to speak to an economic historian or a silver dealer to work that out. It's not so much that silver was cheaper back then but the cost of British labour was so significantly cheaper in the early 20th century.

Very roughly, if we were given the job today, it would cost the client a minimum of around £56,500+VAT for 300 hallmarked silver medals. Perhaps you can work backwards to discover what £56.5k would be equivalent to in 1919 – though I doubt that is an accurate or true method.

Very sorry not to be of more help to you.

Many thanks and best wishes,

Edward MStJ MSt BA FSA.Scot
Head of International Sales and Partnerships

EDITOR It is unfortunate that Vaughtons don't have the records from over 100 years ago, this is not uncommon. Companies are only required to keep 5 years, not 105 years of records.



Also these records would have been paper and that would not only require a lot of space but the paper would deteriorate over time. In addition the company has changed and merged several times since and I am sure the space taken up with "old paper" would need to be reused. Think about how often you clear out old paperwork?

Using the Bank of England inflation counter on Edwards off the cuff estimate for doing the job now £56,500 turns into £1140.04 in 1918. As wages were lower and as Edward says Vaughtons may well have done it at cost I would suggest we are looking at probably (under?) £1000 for approximately 360 medals. Which would make them about £3 each (or about £140 today). However it is not the monetary value that is important.

If anyone has one of these silver medals in their family the Editor would love to hear from you and your family story. Both our [genealogy](#) and [history](#) research teams would be interested in helping write up the story. So contact the Editor@TamworthHeritage.org.uk

Next Edition

Winter 2026

Publication Date: 1st January

Copy Date: 29th November

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) 29th November

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 and 1200 postcards of Tamworth). We can take new photos if you need help with photography

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

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



In the Next issue

The Next Issue is Volume 4 Issue 1 and we hope to be a little more organised with what is in these issues than we were for volume 1.

Several articles we hoped to have in this (and a previous issue) are proving longer to research and complete than anticipated. As we progress we should get a better process and schedule in place. As long as we get the input from the readers! Not just for articles but as researchers for our History and Genealogy Research Groups.

Volume 4 Issue 1 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