



The Staffordshire Hoard and Tamworth, the Ancient Capital of Mercia.

It's not very often that you get the chance to get close to real, valuable buried treasure and look back in time to the 6th century, when Tamworth was the Ancient Capital of Mercia, one of the three kingdoms that ruled the county.

The Anglo-Saxons came to Staffordshire in the late 6th century as groups of settlers or tribes. Mercia means boundary and the area grew from a number of these separate tribes.

The Mercians gradually conquered most of the other Midland tribes to become a powerful kingdom stretching from the Humber to the Thames. The rest of the country was ruled by the kingdoms of Northumbria and Wessex.

Tamworth was the heartland of the Mercian Kingdom and the King's main residence was in Tamworth. It is certain that the Mercian kings spent more time at Tamworth than anywhere else, and it is thought that there was a royal palace at Tamworth by the end of the 7th century situated on the site close to St Editha's Church.

Evidence from signed charters also shows that the Mercian royal families were regularly here for the festivals of Christmas and Easter between 751 and 857 A.D. The most well know Mercian Kings are Penda (625-655), Wulfhere (657-674), Aethelred (674-704), Aethelbald (716-757) and Offa (757-796). Mercian power began to decline after the death of King Offa and by the 10th century it lost its independence, becoming part of the Kingdom of Wessex, to create the Kingdom of England.

The town had significant importance as a military centre and the recent local discovery of the Staffordshire Hoard, the largest collection of Saxon gold ever found, has focused the world's attention on this area. We may never know why it was buried or who it belonged to. Was it part of the royal treasure of the Mercian Kings, buried to hide it from invaders?



View this great You Tube video to see Saxons in Tamworth today:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=xHd5w8fp15A



Route Description

By road: From M42 take A5 Westbound, from A38 take A5 Eastbound, and follow signs for Tamworth. From A453, A51, A513 and B5000, follow signs for Tamworth town centre.

This leaflet has been designed and produced by
Tamworth Borough Council

Tamworth
Borough Council



All information believed accurate at time of print, based on available research. We accept no responsibility for errors. Suggested route is fully accessible by footpaths, however paving surfaces may vary.

If you require this information in another format or language please phone 01827 709581, or email tic@tamworth.gov.uk.

(9/17) 1650

Welcome to Tamworth

Heritage Trail



A self-guided walking tour through the historic town of Tamworth, Staffordshire.

Tamworth
Borough Council



www.visittamworth.co.uk

TAMWORTH Heritage Trail



- | | | |
|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Co-op Grocery Store | 12. Town Hall | 24. Assembly Rooms |
| 2. Castle Hotel | 13. George Street | 25. Memorial Obelisk |
| 3. Bank House | 14. Tamworth Co-op | 26. The Library |
| 4. Brewery House | 15. Tamworth Registry Office | 27. Carnegie Centre |
| 5. LadyBridge | 16. Almshouses | 28. Philip Dix Centre |
| 6. Holloway Lodge | 17. The Globe Public House | 29. St Johns RC Church |
| 7. Aethelfleda Monument and the Black Anchor | 18. Free Grammar School | 30. The Methodist Church |
| 8. Bandstand and flowerbeds | 19. Little Church Lane | 31. 16th Century House |
| 9. Tamworth Castle | 20. St Editha's Church | 32. Old Peel School House |
| 10. Castle Gatehouse | 21. Colin Grazier Statue | 33. The Moat House |
| 11. Robert Peel statue | 22. Colin Grazier Pub | |
| | 23. The Silk Kite Public House | |

T: Public Toilets

Welcome to Tamworth...
Capital of Mercia...
Heart of a Saxon kingdom

Tomtum, the original Saxon settlement, strategically placed at the confluence of the rivers Tame and Anker, became the capital of the Kingdom of Mercia. King Offa, of Offa's Dyke fame, built his palace here where he also founded a mint.

Twice invaded by the Danes, who left their legacy in street names such as Gungate, excavations in the town centre have revealed the remains of fortifications built by King Alfred's daughter, Aethelfleda. The Normans recognised the value of the site and built first a wooden castle, then the fine sandstone shell-keep, the walls of which stand high above the town.

A great fire destroyed much of the town in 1345. Rebuilt, its prosperity increased following the granting of two Charters, in 1560 and 1588, by Elizabeth I. These were later renewed by Charles II in 1663. One of the privileges granted was for a weekly market; this tradition has continued for generations with colourful street markets on Tuesdays and Saturdays.

With the 19th century came the railways and more prosperity for the town whose main industries were coal mining, tape mills, brickworks and ceramics. The Midland Railway from Derby to Birmingham is carried across the Anker by a fine 19-arch viaduct. George Stephenson attended the turf cutting for the Trent Valley Railway which opened in 1847.

Today Tamworth still benefits from its location – an intercity railway station, direct access from two major motorways and two international airports within a 20-mile radius, together with its proximity to the NEC. The old main industries have virtually disappeared, but new industrial estates have been created with a large population expansion in the 60s and 70s. Tamworth is a lively, thriving town with an exciting future.



1 *Co-op Grocery Store.*

The Co-op acquired this splendid building shortly after World War One from Alfred Sadler and Co Ltd, Grocery and tea merchants from around 1884-1917.

WITH YOUR BACK TO THE CO-OP, WALK DOWN SILVER STREET WHERE YOU WILL FIND THE CASTLE HOTEL ON THE CORNER OF MARKET STREET AND HOLLOWAY...

2 *Castle Hotel.*

Dating back to the 19th Century, the building has been used for numerous purposes and been extended many times since. It presently contains the Bow Street Runner pub and the Castle Hotel premises.

CROSS OVER THE ROAD ONTO PAVEMENT UP THE SMALL SLOPE AND BANK HOUSE IS IN FRONT OF YOU

3 *Bank House.*

Formerly *Tamworth Savings Bank*, this Tudor-Gothic style building dates from 1848 and was built to house the bank founded by Sir Robert Peel in 1823.

CONTINUE AND BREWERY HOUSE IS ON YOUR RIGHT...

4 *Brewery House.*

Now an annex to the Castle Hotel, the old Brewery House was donated to the town by Lord Weymouth and Lord Middleton as a workhouse in 1750. It gained its name when it was later purchased by local businessman Edmund Morgan, who owned a brewery to the rear of the property.

CONTINUE DOWN THE SLOPE ONTO LADYBRIDGE...

5 *Ladybridge.*

The bridge crosses the confluence of the River Tame and the River Anker. The lady Bridge we know today was erected in 1796 and widened at each end in 1840. This replaced a medieval bridge dating back to 1294.

GO BACK UP HOLLOWAY AND THROUGH THE ARCHWAY TO...

6 *Holloway Lodge.*

The lodge gatehouse is the most recent addition to the castle, and was built by the 2nd Marquis Townshend in 1810. Shields above the archway commemorate previous castle owners, including the Ferrers and the Marmions.

THROUGH THE ARCHWAY ON THE LEFT IS THE...

7 *Aethelfleda Monument.*

At the base of the castle mound stands a monument to Aethelfleda, daughter to King Alfred the Great. Known as 'Lady of the Mercians', Aethelfleda governed the Kingdom of Mercia from 913 – 918 AD and led attacks on the invading Danes. She is depicted with her nephew Aethelstan, who later became the first King of all England.

ON THE RIGHT IS THE...

Black Anchor.

Originally purchased from the Peel Family at Drayton Manor for £12, the anchor was bought back from the Crimean war in 1855, by William Peel (VC), the third son of Sir Robert Peel. Cannon balls from the Crimea were also purchased along with the anchor and can be found within the Castle's object collections.

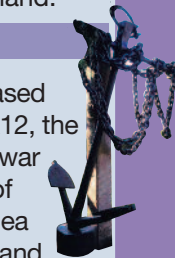
CONTINUE ALONG THE PATH UNTIL YOU SEE...

8 *Bandstand and flower beds.*

Home to concerts during the summer season and offering views across the river and grounds of the castle, the bandstand was built in 1900. The flower beds were added later in 1940.

9 *Tamworth Castle.*

With over 900 years of history, 40 owners and 6 noble families from Baron Robert Marmion to Lord John Townshend, the 5th Marquis, the prominent Norman keep was part of the Motte and Bailey castle dating back to 1070 AD. The Castle was purchased by the Borough Council in 1897 for just £3000.

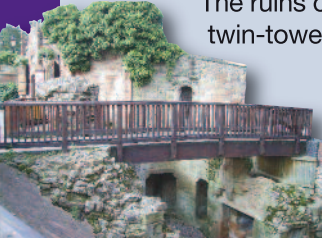


AT THE FOOT OF THE SLOPE KEEP LEFT AND GO OVER THE SMALL WOODEN BRIDGE ONTO...

10 *Castle Gatehouse.*

The ruins of the Castle's 12th century twin-towered stone gatehouse and lodging range.

It incorporated a timber drawbridge over the Castle's dry moat or ditch which separated and defended it from the town.



ONCE OVER BRIDGE, AT CORNER OF NATIONWIDE BS BEAR LEFT, STANDING IN FRONT OF YOU IS...

11 *Robert Peel Statue.*

Bronze statue of Sir Robert Peel, dating from 1852. Former Tamworth MP and twice Prime Minister, Sir Robert delivered his famous 'Tamworth Manifesto' from the window of the Town Hall in 1834.



12 *Town Hall.*

Built by Thomas Guy in 1701. The building once housed the Butter Market and was used to store the town's fire engine. The rear was added in the 19th century.



BEAR RIGHT OF THE TOWN HALL AND CONTINUE DOWN...

13 *George Street.* George Street is home to a number of old buildings: The classically styled *Halifax Building Society* building, complete with ornate balustrade, was built in 1920 and was originally occupied by *Midland Bank*. Next to the entrance to *Ankerside Shopping Centre* is also *Lloyds Bank*, which was rebuilt in 1931 on the site of the existing 18th century building. The building next door opened as *Burtons* in 1936, and retains the original 18th century frontage of what was John Thornburn's Picture House.



CONTINUE TO THE BOTTOM OF GEORGE STREET AND TURN LEFT ONTO COLEHILL. AS YOU APPROACH YATES, ON THE LEFT HAND SIDE IS...

14 *Tamworth Co-op.*

The original buildings were erected in 1855 by Revd William Macgregor. The store opened in 1967 with a second floor added in 1975. Tamworth co-operative Society originally traded from a smaller premises in Church Street.



ON THE OPPOSITE CORNER OF CHURCH STREET IS...

15 *Tamworth Registration Office.*

Originally built as a theatre in 1709, a Baptist church in 1870, the Arts Centre in 1974 until its closure in 2001. Currently now Tamworth Registration Office.



WITH TAMWORTH REGISTRY OFFICE ON YOUR LEFT CONTINUE ONTO LOWER GUNGATE, YOU WILL FIND ON THE RIGHT...

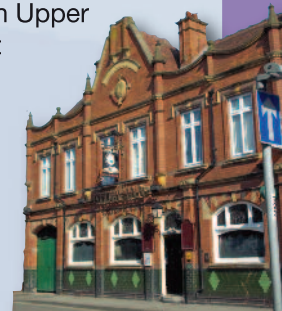
16 *Almshouses.* Founded by Thomas Guy in 1678. Following his rejection by the people of Tamworth in 1708 for election to parliament, before his death he excluded residents of the town from the Almshouses, a restriction which still stands today.



WITH ALMSHOUSES ON YOUR RIGHT, CONTINUE ALONG LOWER GUNGATE, CROSS OVER SPINNING SCHOOL LANE AND YOU WILL FIND ON THE RIGHT...

17 *The Globe Public House.*

The Globe now stands proudly on Upper Gungate and is Tamworth's finest example of the pub palaces erected by the breweries during the tied house war of the late Victorian era and was built at the tail end of the pub rebuilding boom of 1886-1901.



WITH YOUR BACK TO THE GLOBE PUBLIC HOUSE, ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE ROAD YOU CAN SEE...



18 *Free Grammar School.*

The first Grammar School stood on this site for nearly two hundred years from 1668, with five decorative

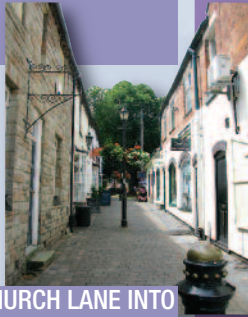
'Ionic' style pilasters adorning the front.

Demolished in 1867, four terraced brick cottages were built on the foundation of the old school. In the 1970s arches were added to the shop fronts, yet the decorative tops of three of the five original Ionic pilasters, as well as the stone Fleur de leys seal dating from the original 1668 building can still be seen between the first floor windows.

HEAD BACK DOWN LOWER GUNGATE UNTIL ON THE RIGHT YOU WILL SEE...

19 *Little Church Lane.*

On the north side of the churchyard is Little Church Lane where old buildings have been carefully and attractively restored into retail premises.



WALK THROUGH LITTLE CHURCH LANE INTO THE CHURCH YARD, FOLLOW PATH ROUND UNTIL YOU REACH THE ENTRANCE OF...

20 *St. Editha's Church.*

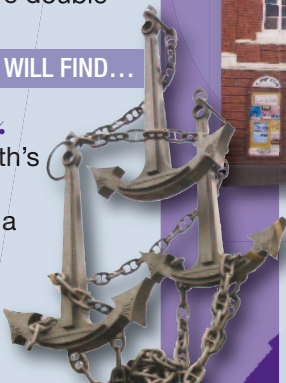
Originally built in 963, most of the building was burned down in 1345. A former Collegiate church with superb stained glass windows and a very rare double-helix spiral staircase.



WALK TOWARDS CHURCH SQUARE AND YOU WILL FIND...

21 *Colin Grazier Statue.*

Erected in 2002 in memory of Tamworth's war hero who gave his life helping to retrieve vital German codebooks from a sinking U-boat in 1942. The three anchor design represents each of the sailors involved.



TURN AROUND AND HEAD BACK ACROSS THE SQUARE WHERE OPPOSITE THE CHURCH ENTRANCE IS ...



22 *Colin Grazier Pub.*

Boasting a magnificent Georgian frontage, the building was Tamworth's police station until 1975. It opened as the Colin Grazier public house in 2001.

WALK DOWN CHURCH STREET UNTIL YOU REACH CORPORATION STREET, ON THE JUNCTION YOU WILL SEE...

23 *The Silk Kite Public House.*

This art deco-style building was constructed in the 1930's for the Tamworth district electric supply company on the site of the Rose and Crown which had opened at some point during 1864-1868. The name of these premises recalls the famous experiment conducted in 1752 by Benjamin Franklin, with a silk kite. It was a milestone in our understanding of how electricity works. Tamworth gained an electricity supply in 1924.



WALK UP CORPORATION ST, ON RIGHT YOU WILL FIND...

24 *Assembly Rooms.*

Built by public subscription in 1889 'the grand old lady of Corporation Street' has been used for everything from assembling gas masks during the war to public meetings and a wide range of musical entertainment. *The Beatles* also famously played at the venue in 1963.



The Assembly Rooms is still a functioning venue. Check out their website to see upcoming shows and events: www.tamworthassemblyrooms.co.uk

TURN INTO CAR PARK AT SIDE OF ASSEMBLY ROOMS, FOLLOW PATH BACK INTO CHURCH YARD, IN FRONT OF YOU WILL SEE THE...

25 *Memorial Obelisk.* This monument was erected by the inhabitants of Tamworth in commemoration of the melancholy and awful death of six female servants who were hurried from time into eternity by a fire which broke out at the Castle Inn during the night of 2 November 1838. The remains of Mary Ann Smith were buried at Whittington and the bodies of the remaining five are deposited beneath this tomb.



BEHIND THE MEMORIAL STANDS...

26 *The Library.*

The Library was opened on 8 June 1973 by the Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher, MP and Secretary of State for Education and Science. The building was designed by John Tetlow and Partners.



WALK BACK INTO THE ASSEMBLY ROOMS CAR PARK, TURN RIGHT INTO CORPORATION STREET AND ON THE RIGHT YOU WILL SEE...

27 *Carnegie Centre.*

Originally built in 1905 as a library and reading room, it was the generosity of Andrew Carnegie who helped establish libraries in many towns. Superseded by the new Library to its rear, the centre, today, is used by a number of voluntary organisations.



ON OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE STREET, JUST TO THE RIGHT OF THE CARNEGIE CENTRE YOU WILL SEE...

28 *Philip Dix Centre and Tourist Information Centre.*

Originally erected in 1911 by the Staffordshire Territorial Forces Association as the North Staffs Army Drill Hall. In 1994 the hall was



renovated for public use and renamed in honour of a long-serving counsellor and former Mayor of Tamworth. Situated in the Philip Dix Centre is the Tamworth Tourist Information Centre which has

been Welcome to Excellence award winners five times and was the first Tourist Information Centre in the UK to be awarded a Gold Service Mark Award for Quality in Tourism Customer Services in 2007.



FROM INFORMATION CENTRE HEAD TOWARDS ZEBRA CROSSING OVER ALDERGATE, WALK DOWN ST JOHN'S STREET AND ON THE CORNER YOU WILL FIND...

29 *St Johns RC Church.*

Erected in 1829, completely remodelled and enlarged in 1956 showing pleasing brick exterior.



TURN AROUND BACK ALONG ST JOHN'S STREET, TURN RIGHT ONTO ALDERGATE AND DOWN ON RIGHT IS...

30 *The Methodist Church.*

Constructed in 1886 with a resplendent bell tower at a cost of £2250. The first 'Methodist' to visit Tamworth was none other than John Wesley himself, following the notorious Wednesbury riots in 1743.



FROM THE METHODIST CHURCH CONTINUE ALONG UNTIL END OF ALDERGATE, TURN RIGHT ONTO LICHFIELD STREET AND CONTINUE WHERE ON RIGHT YOU WILL SEE...

31 *16th Century House.*

Situated on Lichfield Street, home of many fine examples of 18th Century buildings, this well-preserved black and white timber-framed house dates from the 16th Century.



CONTINUE PAST 16TH CENTURY HOUSE AND ON THE RIGHT YOU WILL SEE...



32 *Old Peel School House.*

Funded by Sir Robert Peel, this is the third Peel School. It was built in 1850 to replace the smaller second Peel School.

CONTINUE PAST OLD PEEL SCHOOL HOUSE, UNTIL THE ZEBRA CROSSING, CROSS OVER THE ROAD AND IN FRONT OF YOU TO THE LEFT IS...

33 *The Moat House.*

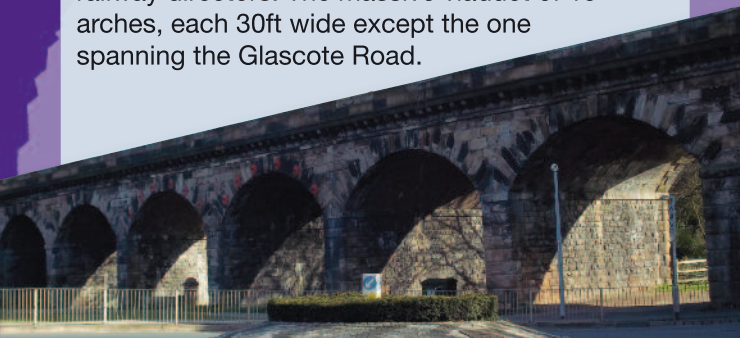
This 16th century building was once the home of the Comberford family. Young Prince Charles, later Charles I, was entertained here in 1619 while his father King James I stayed at Tamworth Castle. In 1815 the building was the venue for a lunatic asylum, and presently serves as a bar and restaurant.



THE RAILWAY ARCHES SPAN THE GLASCOTE AND AMINGTON ROADS. WALK THROUGH THE CASTLE GROUNDS HEADING TOWARDS AMINGTON AND GLASCOTE AND THEY WILL APPEAR IN FRONT OF YOU. (LOCATION 34 IS NOT ON THE MAP)

34 *The Railway Arches.*

Opened on 4 August 1839, by George Stephenson, of Rocket fame, who drove across another of his engines, aptly named Tamworth, pulling six carriages containing local gentry and railway directors. The massive viaduct of 19 arches, each 30ft wide except the one spanning the Glascote Road.



(LOCATION 35 IS NOT ON THE MAP)

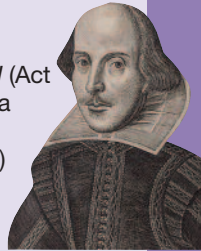
35 *The Spital Chapel.*



The chapel was originally built in 1266-1274 by Philip de Marmion after the land was granted to him by King Henry III for his loyal services at the battle of Evesham.

Facts about Tamworth - did you know...?

- Tamworth is mentioned in William Shakespeare's famous tragedy *Richard III* (Act V, Scene II, Line 15) This scene is set on 'a plain near Tamworth' where Henry Earl of Richmond (later becoming King Henry VII) rallies his army the night before the battle of Bosworth Field.



*Fellows in arms, and my most loving friends,
Bruised underneath the yoke of tyranny,
Thus far into the bowels of the land
Have we march'd on without impediment;
And here receive we from our father Stanley
Lines of fair comfort and encouragement.
The wretched, bloody, and usurping boar,
That spoil'd your summer fields and fruitful vines,
Swills your warm blood like wash, and makes his trough
In your embowell'd bosoms, this foul swine
Lies now even in the centre of this isle,
Near to the town of Leicester, as we learn
From **Tamworth** thither is but one day's march.
In God's name, cheerly on, courageous friends,
To reap the harvest of perpetual peace
By this one bloody trial of sharp war.*

Facts about Tamworth

- did you know...?

- Height above sea level: 85-90 metres.
- Tamworth is twinned with Bad Laasphe, Germany (located between Dortmund and Frankfurt) and Vaujours, France (located North-East of Paris)
- The River Anker and the River Tame converge near the base of Tamworth Castle.
- The Birmingham and Fazeley Canal meets the Coventry Canal at Fazeley Junction, just south of the town centre.
- Despite being landlocked in the heart of the country, Tamworth branch of the Royal National Lifeboat Institute (RNLI) sponsor a D-class inshore lifeboat called 'Spirit of Tamworth', currently stationed at Barrow lifeboat station in Cumbria.
- The pavements were flagged in 1807.
- Tamworth had gaslight from 1835.
- Tamworth Football Club was founded in 1933 and is nicknamed 'The Lambs' after The Lamb public house that originally stood on the site of the team's home ground.
- The Tamworth Shield is formed of a Fleur-de-lys, the ancient town seal from the reign of Elizabeth I up until 1968, beneath a horizontal band of blue and white fess vair design taken from the arms of the Marmion family, owners of Tamworth Castle from 1101-1291. The saltire in chief, the gold cross on blue background, represents the ancient kingdom of Mercia, of which Tamworth was the capital.
- The Borough Coat of Arms crest sees the Tamworth Shield supported by the crowned lion, representing Staffordshire, and the chained bear representing Warwickshire. Tamworth was situated in both counties until 1889. The crest is headed by a representation of Tamworth Castle, behind crossed swords, standing for the office of Champion of England, held by the Marmion family.



- Tamworth is famous for a traditional breed of pig, the Tamworth Sandyback, with a unique golden-red pigment. Two such pigs escaped from an abattoir in Wiltshire in January 1998 and went on the run, earning them the nicknames 'Butch Cassidy' and 'The Sundance Pig'. After the story appeared in the national press, the Daily Mail newspaper purchased the escaped pigs, relieving them from slaughter in an animal sanctuary. In 2004 the BBC dramatised the story in the film 'The Legend of the Tamworth Two'.
- The Tamworth Herald was founded in 1868.
- The first cemetery opened in 1876.
- The first hospital was built in 1880.
- Queen Elizabeth I, granted the first Market Charter in 1560.
- Royal visitors to Tamworth include:
 - Her Royal Highness Princess Margaret, who unveiled the church's new west window and opened the new police station on 2nd July 1975.
 - Her Majesty the Queen, who opened Ankerside Shopping Centre on 6th June 1981.
 - His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, who took the salute at the Mercian Regiment formation day on 1st September 2007. On this occasion the Royal standard was flown from Tamworth Castle.



- The Reliant Motor Company, famous for the Reliant Robin three-wheeler, was built at the Reliant plant in Kettlebrook, Tamworth, for 65 years up until December 1998.
- Tamworth and surrounding area, not only had a thriving coal mining industry but as an off-shoot had enormous amounts of clay. A local company called Gibbs and Canning decided to utilise this clay into pottery works. In the Castle Grounds you will notice very large Greek style urns produced by them. They also provided much of the ornamental stonework that fronts the Royal Albert Hall in London and the Law Courts in Birmingham.



Tamworth Heritage Trust

TAMWORTH HERITAGE TRUST AIMS TO
'RECORD, PRESERVE AND SAFEGUARD'
THE HERITAGE OF TAMWORTH.

Formed 14 years ago, Tamworth Heritage Trust delights in delving into our rich history. From Offa King of Mercia, to King Arthur's daughter, Aethelfleda and her nephew Athelstan, arguably the first king of England; then later Tamworth nurtured Sir Robert Peel MP, benefited from William MacGregor's co-operative movement, John Rawlett, Vicar of Tamworth and of course Sir Thomas Guy MP who gave us our Town Hall and Almshouses.

Today we research local heroes whose names appear on memorials, and blue plaques – perhaps you know someone too.

Projects completed or currently being worked on are:

- Archiving Church records
- Restoration of Aethelfleda monument
- Securing the bust of William MacGregor
- Developing a greater awareness of the history of Tamworth by organising and promoting history talks and lectures throughout the year.
- The Amington WW1 War Memorial project
- The creation of the Tamworth History Group at Tamworth Library.
- Tamworth Blue Plaque Scheme



History is a living thing, as vibrant as Tamworth itself! If you would like to get involved and join the Tamworth Heritage Trust please go to:

www.tamworthheritagetrust.co.uk

Famous People

William Peel

The 3rd son of Sir Robert Peel was one of the youngest sea captains in the Royal Navy during the Crimean War. He was one of the first recipients of the Victoria Cross.



William MacGregor

One of our un-sung heroes is William MacGregor, a man who served to improve the lives of Tamworth people for more than 60 years, he founded the co-operative society, he erected the first hospital in the town, he was also famous for his collection of Egyptology, in fact 2 Egyptian

mummies are buried in Tamworth soil. He was a noted authority and publicist on Greek pottery. The MacGregor collection was sold at Sothebys for huge amounts of money to galleries and museums all over the world. He is noted as one of the most important collectors and the catalogue can be viewed today at the British Museum.



General Bailey Willington

On Colehill, the building we know as Dewes Sketchley Solicitors was in fact the home of General Bailey Willington, born in 1755, he was an artillery commander at the siege of Gibraltar in 1782.



Samuel Parkes and John Edden

In the Crimea, at an area known as Balaklava, on October 25, 1854 just one hour before

dawn, the most infamous, ludicrous and suicidal military action ever was about to take place.

Known today as 'The Charge of The Light Brigade' it was a catastrophic blunder which was to become an heroic chapter in British history. English troops were ordered to charge down a valley, flanked each side with Russian canons with an order to advance to the front to prevent the enemy carrying away the guns. This order – whether it was intended or misinterpreted is still open to debate – sent 673 men charging down a valley made infamous as 'The Valley of Death' in Alfred Lord Tennyson's famous poem.

Tamworth has a great and significant part in this celebrated event, for two of the heroes of 'The Charge' were Tamworth men and one of them won the Victoria Cross (VC) for his heroic action on that terrible day.

John Edden of the 4th Light Dragoons charged at full pelt down the Valley of Death, having two horses shot from under him. The other man, Samuel Parkes, also of the 4th Light Dragoons was the bodyguard of his commanding officer and, like Edden, he had his horse shot from under him. Many of their comrades didn't survive the bloody carnage and those who reached the guns were ill equipped to carry out the order and had to retreat, retracting their route past fallen comrades whose bodies, and horses, had been terribly torn apart by relentless shelling.

Hugh Crawford, the trumpeter of his regiment, also had his horse shot from beneath him and as the horse fell, he became trapped beneath it. Crawford also lost his sword and injured his arm. Realising his dire predicament, Samuel Parkes ran to his aid, fought off Russians and

Cossacks, and was then joined by John Edden. As the three retreated, they came upon their second in command, Major Halket, who was lying on the ground, mortally wounded. Edden and Crawford managed to lift him onto Parkes's back whilst he fought off the Russians and Cossacks, wielding his sword like a madman. The sight of 6ft 2ins Parkes fighting for his life with an injured man on his back was a sight to behold.

Eventually Parkes was diarned by his Russian foes and along with Crawford was taken prisoner. His actions at least allowed Edden and others to escape the bloody carnage and reach the relative safety of the British lines.

After a year in captivity, Parkes was repatriated – and inexplicably Court Martialled for desertion. When the full story emerged, however, he was cleared of all charges and rather than be punished, he was awarded the Victoria Cross. Parkes was only the second man in the British Army to receive this ultimate medal for gallantry under fire and was presented with his medal by Queen Victoria herself in Hyde Park, London on June 26, 1857.

John Edden escaped on foot and returned to Tamworth where he lived out his long life as a venerated hero.

Samuel Parkes, after leaving the army, lived out his life in relative poverty in London. He died in 1864 and was buried in an unmarked paupers grave in Brompton Cemetery.

Parkes's great great nephew, Peter Elkin, discovered the existence of where Parkes was buried and made it his mission to ensure his story would become known, remembered and given the honour he so greatly deserved.

The Victoria Cross, Britain's highest award for bravery, was born out of the Crimean War and the medals themselves are still made from the bronze of cannons which the Light Brigade were sent to retrieve.

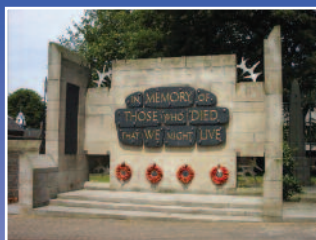




John Rawlett

The Rev. John Rawlett, B.D. was born in Tamworth. He held church appointments across the country and was highly regarded as a preacher and writer of devotional books. His name lives on in the Trust he set up to administer his will for the benefit of the people of the town and,

more recently, in the naming of The Rawlett School, Tamworth.



2014 marks the 100th anniversary of WW1

Tamworth wishes to acknowledge this event and to remember all those brave people of Tamworth who lost their lives during this conflict.



HISTORY AND HERITAGE AROUND TAMWORTH

National Memorial Arboretum

Croxall Road, Alrewas,
Staffordshire, DE13 7AR
Tel: 01283 792333
Email:
info@thenma.org.uk

**150 acres of trees and
memorials devoted to
remembrance.
Open daily.**



Pooley Heritage Centre

Pooley Lane, Polesworth, Warwickshire, B78 1JA
Tel: 01827 897438
Email: parks@warwickshire.gov.uk

**Built on the site of the former Pooley Hall Colliery.
Set within a 62 acre site, the Centre explores the
area's mining heritage. Open every weekend
throughout the year.**

Middleton Hall

Middleton, Tamworth,
Staffordshire, B78 2AE
Tel: 01827 283095
Email: middletonhalltrust@btconnect.com



**3½ miles south of the A5 junction with the A4091.
Former home of two great naturalists, Middleton
Hall lies in 36 acres of grounds and is perhaps best
known for its Georgian west wing. It also houses
the Peel Museum.
Restricted opening. Courtyard Craft Centre open all
year, Wed-Sun and Bank Holidays.**

Staffordshire Regiment Museum

Whittington Barracks, Lichfield, Staffordshire, WS14 9PY
Tel: 01543 434394

**Located at Whittington Barracks, 3 miles North
West on the A51 to Lichfield.
The museum is open Mon-Fri. Also open weekends
and Bank Holidays from Easter.**