

As MacGregor got older he endowed Tamworth Castle with certain collections but decided to sell the majority of his collection privately. The MacGregor collection was sold by Sotheby's for huge amounts to galleries and museums all over the world. The sale catalogue describes him as 'one of the most important collectors of Egyptology', the catalogue can be viewed today at the British Museum.

Mr MacGregor had an abiding love of history and his concern for the proper maintenance of Tamworth Castle was deep and practical.

In 1899 he addressed the 350 invited guests at an official luncheon to celebrate the acquisition of the Tamworth Assembly rooms:

*In my public life, which has not been a short one, I have known no moment of supreme satisfaction than when the auctioneers' hammer fell on Whit Tuesday night two years ago in the Town hall, Guy built for us, and the auctioneer announced that the ancient Castle of Tamworth, with its history dating from 775, had become the property of the Mayor and Corporation of Tamworth in the name of the people.*

*It will be to us a centre of light and life, a centre of the history of our town and England and we shall gather there in the course of time, collections, scientific and artistic, of interest to us.*

*I can only trust that as the young men and women of Tamworth grow up here and see their Castle rising in the midst of them, their minds will be carried back to the story of England's history, that they will feel that history is a real and living thing. The people of Tamworth are the trustees of the Castle for the people of England, and I hope I may say for that wider Anglo-Saxon race which lies beyond all the seas.*

William MacGregor not only cared about the buildings in Tamworth but the welfare of its people, particularly the young. He wanted them to have a sense of pride and citizenship.

William MacGregor was 89 years old when he passed away on 26 February, 1937 at his home, Bolehall Manor, a house he had built for himself on land bordering the River Anker. His civic life and dedicated service to the people of Tamworth spanned some 60 years, a man in advance of his time. Bolehall Boys School was renamed as William MacGregor School in honour of the man who had done so much for Bolehall and for Tamworth as a whole.



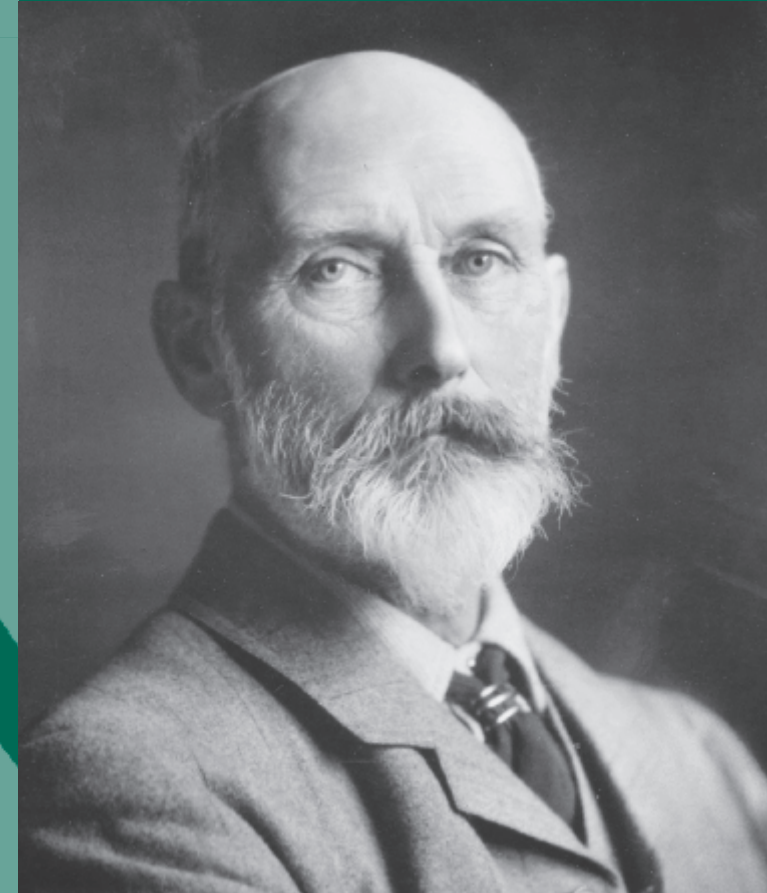
All information believed accurate at time of print, based on available research.  
No liability is accepted for errors.

If you require this information in another format or language please phone 01827 709581, or email [tic@tamworth.gov.uk](mailto:tic@tamworth.gov.uk).

(09/17) 0961

Welcome to Tamworth

# William MacGregor



An introduction to the history of William MacGregor.

Tamworth  
Borough Council



[www.visittamworth.co.uk](http://www.visittamworth.co.uk)

# William MacGregor

## 1848 - 1937

Born on May 16, 1848 of a wealthy Scottish shipping family, William MacGregor. He was educated at Rugby School and then went on to Exeter College Oxford where he graduated as a B.A. in 1871 and an M.A. in 1874.

He was ordained as a deacon in 1872 and a Priest in 1873 at Lichfield. He was curate of Hopwas from 1872 -76.

In 1877 -78 he moved to St Matthias', Liverpool serving as vicar of that parish.

William MacGregor, a very godly man with immense faith devoted his life to the people of Tamworth and spent the first 10 years of his ministry visiting the poor and squalid homes where typhoid was often rampant. He campaigned tirelessly for every home to have clean water and sanitation despite the strong opposition from the town's wealthy inhabitants.

He welcomed children and orphans from the Tamworth Workhouse (later St. Editha's Hospital) into his home to holiday. A lifelong bachelor, he loved children and encouraged them to save in a Penny Bank.

He brought in 2 curates to help him and personally financed these.

In 1880 he founded the first hospital at his own expense and acted as honorary secretary for many years, his interest in the hospital never waned.

William MacGregor was Chairman of the Tamworth Herald from 1906-28, he started a free library and a coffee house (for teetotallers) and established a working men's club as a place where a working man could take his wife for a social evening.

## Buildings

He built two churches, at Glascoate and Hopwas and had the bells of St. Editha's re-cast. He also occasionally served as a magistrate.



Hopwas Church

On one occasion a young boy was brought before him for playing football in the road, the boy informed him that there was no where else to play so William MacGregor purchased a plot of land near the railway arches – Bolehall Park (now known as MacGregor Park) which he gave to the young people of the town.

He started a Mothers' Union and employed a home nurse to visit and help poor mothers with infants at home. He then started a girls' club where they could not only learn needlework and religion but have a place to read and chat.

The poor people of Tamworth appealed to William MacGregor to help them start a Co-operative Society where they could purchase food cheaply and share in the profits. In 1885 he sourced the premises in Colehill and acted as guarantor. The local shopkeepers were enraged and feared that this cut-price Co-op would affect their livelihoods. They wrote to the Bishop in anger, people stopped attending church in protest and Mr MacGregor was subjected to abuse. In 1887 this sad episode caused William MacGregor to resign as vicar but he decided that he would continue spending the rest of his life doing good in his own way.



Tamworth Co-op

He went on to found the St George's Club and Institute for young men. The club had rooms for classes and even a fine baths. For a quarter of a century the institute was used for the social, physical and educational benefit of the town's young people.

In later life he suffered a serious lung illness which caused him to convalesce abroad in Egypt. Here he became enchanted with the Land of the Pharaohs and began studying their art. He became an eminent Egyptologist and amassed the most valuable private collection which he housed in a special museum which he had specially built at Bolehall Manor. At least two of the mummies he brought back from Egypt are buried in local soil as they had begun to deteriorate.

He was also a noted authority and publicist on Greek pottery which earned him the Fellowship of the Society of Antiquaries.



Bolehall Manor