

*PROTECTING THE PAST PROMOTING THE PRESENT PLANNING FOR POSTERITY*

Welcome Members old and new. In the last year the Society has consolidated a strong position and presence in the heritage sector locally and nationally. We continue to welcome more members which will ensure that we have a strong voice on important issues. Our busy and varied programme of enjoyable social meetings and events attracts great interest and support .

This letter will bring you up to date with a quick summary of the Society's activities, and set out the forthcoming programme of events. The committee has worked very hard on a number of worthwhile projects, and we hope that many more members will become actively involved. We particularly wish to exploit our members' talents by organising participation in focused sub-groups to concentrate on crucial aspects of the Society's work such as the constantly demanding area of town and country planning and development. Please contact your committee and volunteer.

As most members know, TDCS has an active presence on *facebook*, and an informative website, with details about events past and future, as well as a blog, to which you are invited to submit articles on subjects of interest. Members will also receive e-mails for first pick of forthcoming opportunities. We will also send regular newsletters. We hope members will connect with each other and form a network of like-minded people to protect and promote Tamworth and District.

### **PLANNING MATTERS**

TDCS has built positive relationships with our local planning departments. We monitor all planning applications, and are represented on the Tamworth Conservation Area Advisory Committee. Current issues which require our attention include the developments at Arkall farm, which has just been called in for review, Coton Lane, Bonehill Road, Wigginton Park, and the encroaching Lichfield and North Warwickshire plans which have a huge impact on Tamworth's collapsing infrastructure.

### **PROTECTING OUR OUTLOOK**

In April, the Civic Society objected to an application to build apartments, restaurants and business units on a site on Bonehill Road, adjacent to Lady Bridge. Our main concern related to the ultra-modern design of the project, which we felt would be totally out of context with the rest of the area, which is one of considerable historic importance.

Derek Hoey represented the Society at the meeting of the Council's Planning Committee. In a speech which focused on the need for such development to be in sympathy with the town's heritage, Derek pointedly asked of the assembled councillors – 'Do we really want those who visit Tamworth Castle to look out from the ramparts and see something like a cross between a solar panel farm and a scene from Blade Runner?'

After some debate, the committee agreed with the Society that the development would result in the visual destruction of an important area and refused the application.

However, a revised application has now been approved, subject to conditions. So look out for more news – and please support your Civic Society.

## WILNECOTE BOARD SCHOOLS

From its inception TDCS has been campaigning to save the Victorian buildings at the heart of Wilnecote from the fate proposed by an apparently distant and dismissive Staffordshire County Council, which was demolition, and replacement with an unimaginative, ill-conceived, unnecessary older-people's home. The buildings were in use as an asset of community value, but the local groups of young and old people were evicted last year.

The schools, built in 1877-1878 - as a direct result of the 1870 Education Act and so historically important in the history of education, architecture, and social progress - are a rare early example of the work of nationally important architect **Basil Champneys**, featuring innovative technical design, and deserve to be preserved and retained. The schools are associated with famous figures, including architect Basil Champneys, terracotta manufacturer George Skey, and ex-pupils, renowned footballer **Harry Hibbs**, and WWII hero, **Colin Grazier**. The Victorian Society supported an application for national heritage listing, which was refused. TDCS presented our findings to Tamworth Borough Council and advised upon the options available to protect this asset to the town. We pointed out that the Wilnecote Conservation Area was flawed and long overdue for review. The Council subsequently initiated a review, but incredibly, rejected the opportunity to include the buildings in the Conservation area and to give them further statutory protection.

Local County Councillors who attended public meetings TDCS organised and made promises of support must stand or fall at the elections on 4 May on their actual record of voting and action, or inaction, on this and other matters of importance to their constituents.

## TAMWORTH WAR MEMORIALS



Members of Tamworth and District Civic Society are taking part in cataloguing the borough and district War Memorials as part of a workshop devised by Civic Voice organised by Anna Wilson. Pictures and condition reports are being logged on at [www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk](http://www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk) as part of an ongoing programme during the centenary of the 1914-18 war.

Most people are aware of the larger war memorials, buildings and windows in the town, but we are also trying to catalogue those smaller items that have been dedicated to victims of war, a chair to the unknown soldier, candlesticks, or other items to a named individual, or even more modern ones not previously noted. If any readers are aware of items or which we may not be aware, our work is not finished yet, please get in touch with [dianekeenewells@hotmail.com](mailto:dianekeenewells@hotmail.com) or 01827 703820 so we can photograph and record condition. The condition reports will help if the item needs repair as there are partial grants available.

## TAME VALLEY WETLANDS COMMUNITY MEETING

This free event in March 2017 was aimed to bring together the communities of the Tame Valley Wetlands. It was an opportunity for local groups or individuals with an interest in access to the countryside, heritage or the environment, to network and share best practice, meet similar groups, share tips and ideas, and be inspired. It was also a chance to find out about the Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership and get involved.

The Tame Valley Wetlands, spanning from Birmingham through rural North Warwickshire and Tamworth, is a landscape of real importance for society and nature, and one which is under substantial pressure. The canal network and the River Tame and its floodplain form the largest series of interconnected wetlands in the Midlands – this connectivity and availability of open space is a vital asset for both people and wildlife. The Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership, led by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust and supported by a variety of organisations including charities, local groups, statutory bodies and councils, formed over 10 years ago in recognition of the importance of this landscape, with the vision 'to create a wetland landscape, rich in wildlife and accessible to all'. Work has involved restoring the floodplain and improving the river in

Kingsbury and Tamworth by re-naturalising the channel and reinstating an historic river island; restoring the Drayton Turret Footbridge – an iconic 200 year old Grade II listed structure on the canal, formerly owned by Sir Robert Peel; and enhancing hundreds of metres of hedgerow for the benefit of wildlife. The Tame Valley Wetlands not only provide a vital role in reducing flooding, improving water quality and providing a home for wildlife; they are also special places for people to relax and enjoy, improving health and wellbeing. A key aim of the Scheme is to encourage responsible and improved access to the countryside and nature reserves for people living in Tamworth, Kingsbury, Coleshill, Castle Vale, Water Orton and nearby villages.

Ruth Robinson

## ACTIVITIES

**The Inaugural Tamworth Lecture** on *Ethelbald, the Saints and the 'Mercian Supremacy'*

with renowned historian Dr. John Hunt took place on Friday 21 April in the atmospheric venue of the Castle Hotel and was popular and very well-received. This initiative is intended to become a prestigious annual event. Each year a prominent or learned speaker will deliver a public address on a topic related to the history or heritage of Tamworth & District. Tamworth's history is so rich & varied that the speakers could come from any number of disciplines including history, archaeology, architecture, & politics, & cover any period and aspect of the town from its origins to the present day.

**Our varied and innovative events programme** has delivered education, culture, and fun, and our future programme looks equally enthralling.

Since last year's AGM, TDCS has hosted stalls at Tamefest at Kingsbury Water Park, Tamworth Market, Tamworth Library's Family History Day, and in the Town Hall for Heritage Day.

TDCS arranged a moving wreath laying commemorative **Armistice Day** Service at the Tamworth War Memorial Hall, MacGregor Tithe, attended by notable personages such as our local Mayors & Parish Councillors, Schools, Armed Forces, Police, Tamworth's MP, and a Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire.

We have also organised our scintillating array of monthly member events including the screening of the 1916 Film, '**The Battle of the Somme**', with learned exposition by expert Geoff Noon, the hugely successful visit to **Statfold Barn Farm Steam Railway**, a fascinating guided tour of the secrets of **Drayton Bassett**, **The Christmas Quiz** and Fish and Chip Supper at the immaculately restored Wilnecote Parish Hall, an enlightening Talk on **Tamworth: the Future** by **Stacy Birt** of **Tamworth Council**, an illuminating visit to **Kingsbury Church** with a knowledgeable Talk by local historian Carole Haines on **Kingsbury Hall and other notable buildings** in the village, and the engrossing Chris Jones Talk on **Canal Heritage**.

**TDCS** is a member of **CIVIC VOICE**, the national charity for the civic movement, aiming to make places more attractive, enjoyable and distinctive, and promote civic pride. Civic voice called TDCS **one of the most active societies in England**. We are collaborating with them in the War Memorials project. Our Chairman received recognition with a prestigious national award by the Marsh Christian Trust as *Volunteer of the Year* for his work in relaunching our Society. Consequently we were invited to the Westminster launch of Civic Day 2017, where our local MP's joined us to offer support. As our member, you enjoy benefits of Civic Voice membership, and are entitled to apply for free National Trust admission passes. See Civic Voice's website for details.

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## OBITUARIES

A too brief reminder that TDCS has lost members and friends and offers heartfelt condolences and sympathy to all family and friends

**John Wells:** One of the first members to join the relaunched TDCS, John served on Tamworth Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council and was Mayor of Tamworth in 2005-06. His dedication to the community was evident in his support for and involvement in local voluntary groups, not only TDCS, also The Peel Society, Hodge Lane Conservation Group, and Tamworth Heritage Trust.

**Jill Wood:** Jill was a founder member of the Steering Committee formed in Summer 2015 to re-launch our Civic Society, and continued on the executive committee. Her enthusiasm, love of history and heritage, brilliant ideas, dedication, hard work, and friendship sustained and inspired us until her sudden unexpected passing and she is greatly missed.

**Norman and Mavis Biggs:** Chairman and Honorary President, and Honorary Secretary of the Tamworth Civic Society in the 1970's steering it to some notable and lasting achievements, founders of the Peel Society, their long and productive involvement in Tamworth's heritage has left a fine legacy and example for us to follow.

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## NOTICE

All Members are invited to attend the Second  
**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
of **The Tamworth and District Civic Society**  
on Tuesday **16<sup>th</sup> May 2017** at 7.30pm  
at the CENTRAL METHODIST CHURCH, TAMWORTH

The Programme for the Meeting will include:

- The Chairman's Report
- The Honorary Treasurer's Report
- Election of Officers and Committee
- **Presentation by Peter Johnson on The Knowle Society**
- Exhibitions
- Open Discussion topics

*Members Only Event*

*Refreshments will be available*

All Members are entitled to attend, and have one vote per Member. Nominations for election of members to the Committee must be submitted in writing [signed by a proposer and seconder, and with the consent of the nominee] and be received by the Chairman not later than 7 clear days before the date of the AGM.

www.tamworthcivicsociety.co.uk e-mail: secretary@tamworthcivicsociety.com / treasurer@tamworthcivicsociety.com

Your indefatigable Committee seeks members who are willing to join the Committee and make a commitment to building an effective and influential Civic Society.

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### PROGRAMME OF EVENTS & ACTIVITIES FOR MEMBERS from SPRING 2017

#### **MAY**

Sun 7 May 10am **Guided Walk: Dosthill Park** - Dave Ansell of Dosthill Park Wildlife Group (Free - members only)

Tues 16 May 7.30 pm **AGM & The Knowle Society Talk by Peter Johnson**. Central Methodist Church

Saturday 27 May 11 am Stall at **TameFest, Tamworth Castle Grounds** (Free to helpers)

#### **JUNE**

Saturday, 17 June Civic Day TDCS Stall at **Amington Fete**, Landau Forte Academy (Free to helpers)

Sunday 18 June 12.30 pm **Lunch & Gardens Trust Talk** (& optional Walk) with **The Honourable Robert Peel**.

Location: **Drayton Manor Park** (Hamilton Suite) (£18 members/ £20 guests)

#### **JULY**

Sat 8 July 10am Visit to **Statfold Barn Farm Steam Railway** (Members £6 & £3 under 16s/Guests £8.50 & £4 under 16s)

Sunday 30 July 2pm Visit to **Elford Hall Walled Garden** and **Elford Parish Church** (Chargeable)

#### **SEPTEMBER**

Wed 13 September 7.00 p.m. 3rd Group Visit to **DMS Whittington** (Free - members only-pre-registration essential)

**Heritage Open Day** TDCS Stall in **Tamworth Town Hall** (Free to all)

#### **OCTOBER**

Wed 25 October 7.00 p.m. 4th Group Visit to **DMS Whittington** (Free - members only-pre-registration essential)

Mon 30 October 7.30 p.m. Talk: **Royal Navy** by Steve Dunn - **75th Anniversary of Death of Colin Grazier G.C.**

St. George's Chapel, Tamworth Parish Church. Joint event with Tamworth Lit Fest (£5 everyone)

#### **NOVEMBER**

Saturday 11 November noon TDCS's **Armistice Day Service, Hall of Memory**, Hospital Street

(Free. Members only & Invited Guests)

Wed 22 Nov 7.30p.m. "**The Future of the Civic Movement**" Talk by Roger Sutton, Trustee of Civic Voice &

Treasurer of the West Midlands Association of Civic Societies. St George's Chapel, Tamworth Church (Free)

#### **DECEMBER**

**Christmas Social & Quiz** (chargeable)

***Come along and tell your friends!***

*(provisional programme, subject to possible alteration or additions, look out for updates)*