

THE **TAMWORTH**  
AND **DISTRICT**  
**CIVIC SOCIETY**

Newsletter  
*number 1* April 2016

*PROTECTING THE PAST PROMOTING THE PRESENT PLANNING FOR POSTERITY*

The Tamworth Civic Society was originally founded in 1973. After a period of dormancy, it was – under a Steering Committee led by former Civic Society committee member, David Biggs – successfully relaunched in September 2015 at a packed public meeting. We are now **The Tamworth and District Civic Society** to emphasise that the society is also concerned, as it always has been, with the villages in the district around the town in both Staffordshire and Warwickshire.

The Civic Society cares about the area's past, present, and future, and aims to be a community forum for improvement. With a strong, shared voice, members believe that they can make a positive difference. TDCS wants the best for Tamworth and District, with lessons learned from the past, positive changes in the present, and a sustainable, well-planned future for local residents. It places strong emphasis on **protecting and promoting the area's heritage and natural environment**, and in encouraging **civic pride and community engagement**.

The Civic Society wishes to protect existing historic architecture and townscape, but it also seeks and supports appropriate new developments that complement and enhance the local built heritage and the area's rich history. It wishes to maintain and protect the natural environment of parks, fields, woodland and other green spaces which support flora and fauna, and provide the "green lungs" for local people.

Overall, TDCS campaigns for an attractive town and district, with a sustainable infrastructure and a thriving, cohesive community that takes justifiable civic pride in its heritage and identity.



Six months from the launch of the revived Society we have over 100 members and are making a difference in Tamworth and District.

← **Public Launch Meeting 22 September 2015** -

Chairman Dr David Biggs with Mayor of Tamworth, and Consort, Maureen and Ken Gant, Chairman of Lichfield District Council and Consort, Norma and Brian Bacon, and Dr Freddie Gick, Chairman of Civic Voice, the national organisation of the civic movement.

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## SCOUTING FOR MEMBERS

The Society has recruited its **100<sup>th</sup> member** 20 year old Sam Kingstone, local scout leader and Fazeley town councillor and Deputy Town Mayor.



We are thrilled to have achieved our 100<sup>th</sup> member so soon, and to **be appealing to young people** like Sam who care about our community and engage with it positively, rather than complaining that there is nothing to do, or that no one listens to their views. The messages of TDCS appeal to people of all ages and backgrounds, not just those who remember the area as it used to be. Preserving our past, protecting our present, and planning for our future, are of equal importance, and we **welcome everyone who believes in those values**, whether old Tamworthians or new to the area. ►►

## »ONE HUNDRED STRONG«

We provide a **strong community voice for people who genuinely care about Tamworth and the villages**, and we have a broad range of activities that enable them to contribute to the improvement of our built and natural environment, and the promotion of our heritage.

These are very exciting and busy times for the reinvigorated Civic Society. There hasn't been such a need for a strong and active watchdog since we were originally founded in 1973. There are so many concerns and issues around the direction in which Tamworth is currently being planned and developed, and every single citizen should be interested in, and doing something about, the decisions being taken around us, because they affect us now, and all future generations.

Sam told us: ***"I am glad to be part of a group where members have good ideas and initiatives to improve our environment and promote our area, and who are enthusiastic and positive about what can be achieved. The new Civic Society is something that young people should be getting involved in, as we shall likely be living in Tamworth for many years to come, and our future is affected by the decisions taken today. I'm looking forward to being able to contribute."***

The Society needs to continue to grow. Our members are from all age groups and every shade of political opinion. We are a non-party-political organisation, united in our shared passion for Tamworth. We aim for mutual support with similar organisations, and have links with and share members with many other groups which have more specifically focussed interests, including the Heritage Trust, History Group, Polesworth Society, LitFest, Friends of Hopwas Wood, Friends of Tamworth Castle, The Peel Society, Middleton Hall Trust, Tamworth Guild of Town Guides, and more. We ask all members to get involved as much as possible in the activities and work of the Society, and to encourage others to join us, so that we will continue to be, in the words of the Civic Voice, a fiercely independent grassroots organisation, provocative, stubborn, forceful, inspiring, and outspoken.

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## PLANNING MATTERS

The Society's aims are:

- to preserve, promote, and celebrate our heritage and history
- to protect and improve the environment
- to advance civic pride and engagement

An important part of our work is therefore to advise on the appropriateness of proposed developments, to encourage **high standards and excellence in town planning, architectural design and quality**, and to provide a forum on planning, environmental, and heritage issues of concern within the community.

To advance these objectives we are engaging with and establishing **close and constructive relationships with our Councils and planners**. We are holding regular meetings with planners at Tamworth Borough Council, Lichfield District Council, and North Warwickshire Borough Council, so that we are kept closely informed of development proposals, and they can benefit from our input. We are represented on the Tamworth **Conservation Area Advisory Committee**, which monitors our seven local conservation areas.

The Society will bring the expertise and experience of our members to make representations to the planners, and will be regarded as a trusted intermediary between local government and local people, a respected and influential voice of the community.

The Society is compiling an At-Risk Register of endangered sites to be carefully monitored, such as the Moat House, the old Tamworth Grammar School, the Victorian Wilnecote Board Schools. There is much important work to be done in this field. If you have any knowledge of, or suggestions about, buildings at risk of neglect or demolition, or if you are interested in joining a Planning Group to monitor and investigate planning issues, please contact the committee. We would welcome the help.

## »PLANNING FOR POSTERITY«

The need for an active and effective Civic Society is highlighted by the unfortunate planning decisions which were already 'faits accomplis' before our launch, such as the plan to build 1100 houses on Amington Golf Course, where 40 years ago the Civic Society planted 1000 trees, the Coton Lane green field development which will add massive congestion, overload amenities, and increase urban sprawl, and the new Local Plan itself.

We have grappled with several important planning issues since our inception only six months ago. To mention just a few.....

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### SOCIETY FIGHTS AGAINST PLANS TO BUILD ON WIGGINTON PARK

Towards the end of 2015, the Society was alarmed to discover that Tamworth Borough Council had submitted a planning application to build on a piece of land which it owned on Wigginton Park. Although disguised under the location of 'Solway Close', their proposal was in fact to build up to 25 houses on the site of the former orangery and outbuildings, butting directly on to Wigginton Lodge itself.

On behalf of the Society, David Biggs submitted a formal objection, highlighting the ancient historical significance of the site, which dates back to Mediaeval times, and querying why the Council had failed to consult with the Georgian Group, as required by law for applications affecting listed Georgian buildings.

The meeting of the Planning Committee on 5<sup>th</sup> January was addressed by Richard Kingstone as the Ward Councillor, and by Derek Hoey, representing the Society. Both spoke passionately against the proposal, pointing out that, back in the 1960's, Tamworth Council had purchased Wigginton Park for it to be set aside as a 'green lung' for residents of the town and arguing that it should remain untouched. However, after some interesting and lively debate, the committee passed the proposal by 8 votes to 5, although it was agreed to slightly reduce the number of units to be built.

So, despite our best efforts, Tamworth Borough Council has intruded into an historic and treasured area of the town, much to the agony of all those who value our heritage and environment – but be assured that Tamworth & District Civic Society will continue to fight on behalf of local residents and make our local authorities aware of their responsibilities and of the feelings of their citizens.

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### WILNECOTE VICTORIAN BOARD SCHOOLS UNDER THREAT

The Society has been closely involved from our launch with the problem of Staffordshire County Council's intentions towards the 1877 school buildings, which we consider to be of architectural merit, as well as being an asset of community value.

We attended a meeting of interested parties at which it seemed clear that a decision had been made, without proper consultation, to evict the community groups that used the buildings, demolish, and replace with a very insensitively and unimaginatively designed private old people's home, with no regard for local heritage or community needs. TDCS was integral to the hugely well-supported public meeting that followed. We gained the support of the Victorian Society, and have lobbied the Councils. We remain concerned and are doing everything possible to thwart the threat.



»PROMOTING THE PRESENT«

TDCS is informed of all local planning applications and will carefully consider and offer constructive comments and reasoned objections, both in writing and in oral representations at committee, wherever appropriate. Other matters of interest at the moment are the County Council's plans for phase 2 of the "Gateway" project in **Victoria Road**; the demolition of **Whittington Heath Golf Club** whose previous incarnations were as racecourse grandstand, and old soldiers' home (pictured→) to build embankments for HS2; proposed development adjacent to **Lady Meadow** and the Castle; the obliteration of the countryside on the north side of Tamworth by blanket development; the insidious blight of garden-grabbers. Let us know what concerns you.



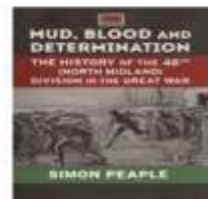
EVENTS REVIEW – The First Six Months

10<sup>th</sup> October 2015, Dr Simon Peale informed and entertained members and guests at the Society's inaugural public talk. The vote of thanks was offered by Committee member Dr Geoff Noon, the founder Chairman of the original Tamworth Civic Society, and recognised expert on the First World War. Geoff is offering an unmissable talk and an exclusive screening of the film "The Battle of the Somme" for the TDCS in June this year.



← We attracted a lot of pre-launch interest at [Heritage Open Day](#) September 2015 in the Town Hall

the **TAMWORTH** and DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY  
 INVITES YOU to a TALK BY DR. SIMON PEALE  
**MUD, BLOOD and DETERMINATION**  
 The HISTORY of the 46<sup>th</sup> (North Midland) Division in the GREAT WAR  
 SATURDAY 10<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2015 at 7.00pm  
 ST. EDITHA'S PARISH AND COLLEGIATE CHURCH, TAMWORTH  
 FREE ADMISSION



...ndred years since the First World War, the author Dr. Simon Peale, Head of History and ...nsborough College, Rugby, Leader of Labour Group, Tamworth Borough Council, Former Mayor of Tamworth, will on this fascinating story of ordinary working men thrown into the war machine, in this, the re-launched Tamworth and ... Civic Society's inaugural public talk.

← Armistice Day – 11 November 2015 - TDCS, with Tamworth Town Guides, offered a walking tour, followed by a solemn ceremony in the Hall of Memory with the Deputy Lieutenant of Staffordshire, and other honoured guests.



the **TAMWORTH** and DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY  
**Christmas Social**  
**QUIZ NIGHT with SUPPER**  
 Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2015 7.30pm  
 St. Editha's Church Hall, College Lane, Tamworth  
 Admission to Quiz Only - Book Now!  
 Contact: [quizzes@tdcs.org.uk](mailto:quizzes@tdcs.org.uk)  
 £7.50 per head including Supper

← December – Mike Nestor, our quiz-master, gave us a mental feast. 2016's Christmas Quiz and Social will be on 3<sup>rd</sup> December at Wilnecote Parish Hall



November 2015 – TDCS supported Tamworth Parish Church's Christmas Tree Festival

# CIVIC SOCIETY ACTIVITIES

TDCS offers a varied programme of events for all our members. Members can meet all year and take part in appealing, educational, sociable, and entertaining activities.

The TAMWORTH and DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY

## Tour of Polesworth Abbey Church

on Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2016 at 2pm

A Guided Tour of the historic Polesworth Abbey Church as guests of the Vicar of Polesworth, Reverend Philip Wells

An opportunity to visit and learn the fascinating history of this ancient building and grounds dating from Anglo-Saxon times as a Benedictine nunnery.



The church is dedicated to a different and earlier St. Editha to that of Tamworth and Amington. There have been significant archaeological investigations in recent years. The Abbey Church is definitely one of the gems in our district, and we hope you will take this opportunity, provided by TDCS, to discover more about this interesting corner of North Warwickshire.

31 January 2016 – 60 people enjoyed our fascinating guided tour of the venerable Polesworth Abbey, Gatehouse, and Gardens. The Society made a generous donation from proceeds towards Church restoration funds



THE TAMWORTH and DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY presents

*What is a Mayor?*  
An Evening of  
Conversation and Enlightenment  
With  
Richard Kingstone, Past Mayor of Tamworth, 2014 - 2015



Talk at the Town Hall, Tamworth  
on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2016

commencing at 7.30 PM

in the presence of

The Worshipful the Mayor of Tamworth, Councillor Mrs. Maureen Gant  
A Donation will be made to the Mayor's Charities  
Light Refreshments will be served

Tickets £2 Members of the Society £3 non-members  
Book from treasurer@tamworthcivicsociety.com or our website or facebook



£3.00 Non-Members

In February, in our historic Town Hall Council Chamber, Richard Kingstone gave us an entertaining insight into the role of Mayor. With the proceeds TDCS made a donation to the Charities supported by current Mayor, Councillor Maureen Gant, who attended with her Consort.



SOCIETY

In March we were in the George Edmund Street-designed Amington Church, with its Burne-Jones window, to have a very enjoyable evening, hearing about the Hodge Lane Local Nature Reserve and viewing a slide show from Co-ordinator, Diane Wells. The proximity of the massive ex-Golf Course development will have a negative impact on this wildlife haven. The Society made a donation for the church roof.



## From LOCAL "TIP" to NATURE RESERVE



A SLIDE SHOW with COMMENTARY by DIANE WELLS  
Co-ordinator of the Hodge Lane Conservation Group

To take place at "St Editha's on the Green", Amington on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2016 commencing at 7.30 p.m.

The inspiring story of The Hodge Lane Local Nature Reserve, a natural oasis near the canal at Amington, featuring rare oak woodland, and ponds, occupying the site of a 19<sup>th</sup> Century brickworks, brought to life by the work of the Hodge Lane Conservation Group, awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in 2013, and now under threat from the Golf Course development

The Parish Church of St Editha's at Amington, designed by George Edmund Street, with East Window by Sir Edward Burne-Jones, is a prime example of an Arts and Crafts Church

Refreshments will be provided by the Church for a small donation  
TDCS will offer a donation to the Church Restoration Fund

Tickets are £2 for members of Tamworth and District Civic Society and £3 for non-members

To reserve tickets or join the Society  
Contact treasurer@tamworthcivicsociety.com  
or visit our website tamworthcivicsociety.com  
or see details on facebook



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We will be visiting the Nature Reserve itself with Diane on Sunday April 17<sup>th</sup>

## OTHER ACTIVITIES...



The Committee meets at least every month for wide-ranging discussions and planning.

All our volunteers have dedicated hours of work to the success of TDCS. Any member interested in joining the Committee, or sub-groups to deal with such matters as Planning, Social Events, Heritage, Memorial, et al, let us have nominations before the AGM.



TDCS was represented at the recent **Staffordshire Tourism "Swap Shop"** at Drayton Manor, to network with all our local attractions and promote our area.



The Chairman gave a talk about the Society to the Tamworth Hockey Club Vice-President's Dinner. If your organisation or group would like a presentation from the Society, or if you can offer to give members a talk, or visit, or have ideas for other events, please get in touch.



Members have also been encouraged to support interesting events put on by our friends in The Polesworth Society, Tamworth Lifest, and others.



TDCS was represented by David Biggs and John Harper at the funeral in March of former Tamworth Civic Society President Joyce Smith



*Thanks are due to the Chairman and Steering Committee for their enthusiasm and unstinting devotion over the last eleven months, and to all who have become members for your support.*

## TALK TO US



All members will have been receiving lots of news from our Chairman by e-mail. Those without e-mail will have had information by post. We will issue Newsletters several times a year. For up-to-the-minute news, follow, like, and share us on **facebook**. Please help to spread the TDCS messages via social media.

Visit our **website [tamworthcivicsociety.co.uk](http://tamworthcivicsociety.co.uk)** often as it is updated regularly. The *Tamworth Herald* will also carry Society news and letters and draw your attention to important news topics.

Look out for our posters. Please attend our events, which we aim to offer at least once a month, and let us have your feedback and views on what we should be doing.

Contact [treasurer@tamworthcivicsociety.com](mailto:treasurer@tamworthcivicsociety.com) or [secretary@tamworthcivicsociety.co.uk](mailto:secretary@tamworthcivicsociety.co.uk), or write to us c/o 79 Wigginton Road, Tamworth B79 8RN.

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## NOTICE

All Members are invited to attend the First  
**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
of The Tamworth and District Civic Society  
on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> May 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
- Members' Vote for formal adoption of the Society's Constitution
- Election of Officers and Committee
- Presentations
- Exhibitions
- Open Discussion topics

*Members Only Event*

*Admission by Membership Card*

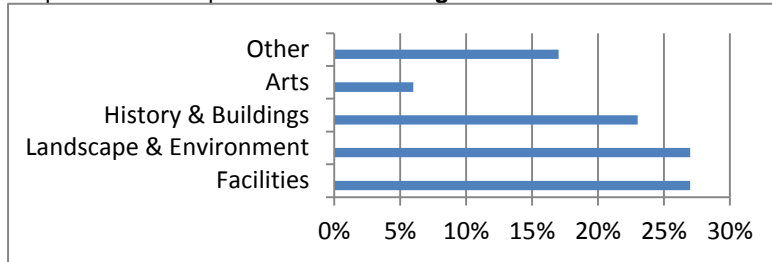
*Refreshments will be available*

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. Please return the attached AGM Return Form

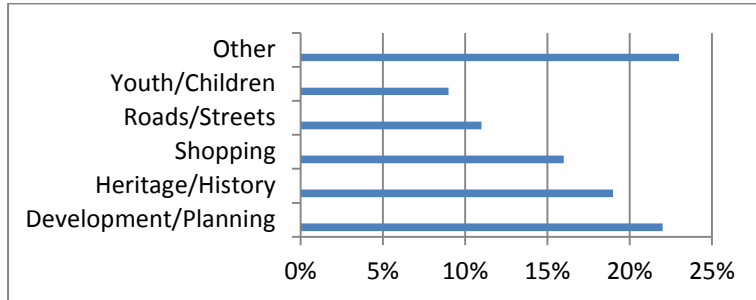
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## WHAT'S GREAT AND WHAT GRATES ABOUT TAMWORTH?

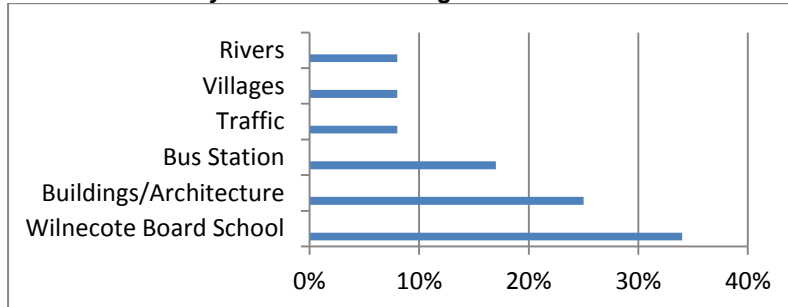
In working towards its aims of promoting, preserving and celebrating the history of the area, The Tamworth & District Civic Society always seeks the views of local citizens. So all of those who attended the Society's launch meeting in September 2015, were invited to submit their comments and ideas on post-it notes and answer some simple but crucial questions – **'What is great about Tamworth?'**



### 'What needs to be better in Tamworth?'



### and 'What would you like to see change in Tamworth?'



The answers gave us some interesting reading – and, of course, several of them form the basis of some of the key issues which we seek to address.

The highlights of 'What is great about Tamworth?' were seen as breadth of the town's facilities, along with its landscaping and environment, closely followed by its heritage and historic buildings. **Rivers, pigs, flower beds, and pubs** were mentioned.

However, things that could be improved included how we manage planning and development of the town, the protection of our heritage and the demise of shopping facilities in the town centre. **Middle Entry, the flats, smells, potholes, roads, and traffic lights** were singled out.

The answers to what people would like to see change in Tamworth were many and varied, but interestingly, one issue that was raised above all others was the retention and protection of Wilnecote Board School – a cause which is still being fought by the Society (in the face of a very awkward position being adopted by Staffordshire County Council).

Chairman David Biggs commented 'We see ongoing engagement with our members – and indeed all local people – as our lifeblood. We need to understand what interests them as well as what concerns them and make sure that we take that into account when planning our activities and making this a vibrant and effective Society'

## SPRING and SUMMER

Our next event is a Tame Valley Wetlands Guided Walk from Dosthill to RSPB Reserve Middleton Lakes. Go to our website to find the link to reserve your places.

In June with the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the **Battle of the Somme** looming we present an exclusive screening of the contemporary 1916 documentary film with commentary by expert Geoff Noon.

July sees a unique opportunity to look behind the scenes at the amazing **Statfold Steam Railway**

[More Dates for your Diary over the page](#)



The TAMWORTH and DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY

Invites You to

Join us on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2016 for our

# Guided WALK

S U N D A Y



S T R O L L

Circular Countryside Route of approx. 5.6 miles setting off at 9.30am from The Fox, Dosthill to RSPB Middleton Lakes, stopping to browse in the lovely independent shops and tea rooms at the Courtyard at Middleton Hall, and returning by about 1.00pm with Rita Gries our

## Tame Valley Wetlands / RSPB Guide

FREE to TDCS Members Non-Members £2

To reserve your place go to [eventbrite.com](http://eventbrite.com): [dosthill-to-middleton-walk](http://dosthill-to-middleton-walk)  
Numbers are limited - see the link on our website [tamworthcivicsociety.co.uk](http://tamworthcivicsociety.co.uk) and on facebook

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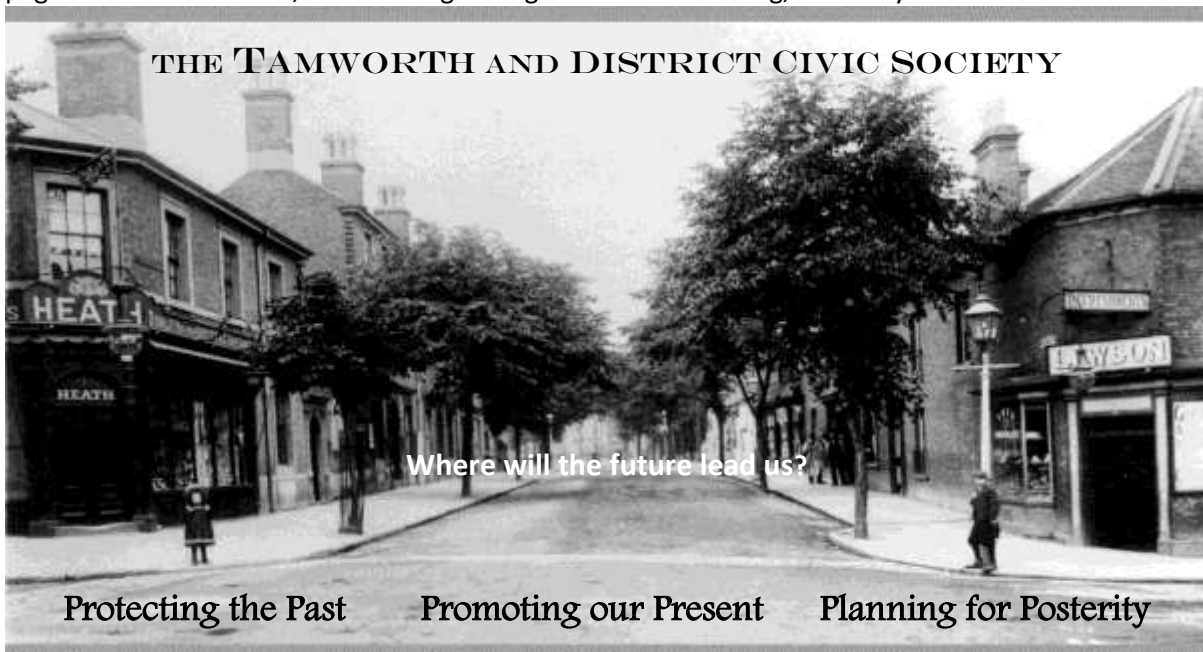
Tame Valley Wetlands



## CALENDAR

<b>EVENTS PROGRAMME 2016 - April to December</b>								
Month	Date	Day	Start	Finish	Venue	Event	Cost - TDCS	Cost - Others
April	17th	Sunday	10.30am		Hodge Lane Local Nature Reserve	Visit with Co-ordinator Diane Wells	FREE	
April	24th	Sunday	9.30am	1.00pm	Dosthill to RSPB Middleton Lakes	Guided Walk with TVW/RSPB Guide	FREE	£2.00
May	17th	Tuesday	7.30pm		Central Methodist Church, Tamworth	<b>AGM</b> Members Only	FREE	N/A
May	28th	Saturday	11.00am	4.00pm	Kingsbury Water Park	Tamefest - TDCS Stall [Tame Valley Wetlands Event]		
June	23rd	Thursday	7.30pm		Tamworth St. Editha's Parish Church	Film: <b>The Battle of the Somme 1916</b> , & Commentary by Geoff Noon	£2.00	£3.00
July	16th	Saturday	10.30am		Statfold Barn Farm Steam Railway	Exclusive behind-the-scenes Tour with Graham Lee and Geoff Noon	£4.00	£6.00
August	20th	Saturday	morning		Drayton Bassett	Guided Village Walk with WI		
September	tbw	Sunday			Tamworth Town Hall	Heritage Open Day		
November	11th	Friday			Tamworth Town Centre	Guided WW1 Walking Tour with qualified Guide followed by...	£5.00	£5.00
November	11th	Friday	10.30am		Hall of Memory	Armistice Day Commemorative Service		
December	3rd	Saturday	7.30pm		Winecote Parish Hall	Christmas Quiz and Supper		

This is our current programme for the rest of the year. We already have some exciting events in progress for 2017. New events may be added. Members will be notified nearer the relevant date. Events may be subject to change. Look for our posters, and see the TDCS website and facebook pages for further details, and booking arrangements. Come along, and tell your friends.



### THE TAMWORTH AND DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY

Where will the future lead us?

Protecting the Past

Promoting our Present

Planning for Posterity