



## The story of our building

The building we are in has a rich and interesting history. The present 'Grammar' school was built in 1867. But before this, the school was a lot closer to the centre of Tamworth, in fact on the very site where Seams and Dreams stands today.

It is widely believed that it was Edgar the Peaceful, great-grandson of Alfred the Great, who founded the first school in Tamworth, at the same time as he built the church, around 960AD. In 1384 there is reference to a Schoolmasters Lane and, presumably, this would indicate that some form of school was by then well established.

Documentation exists to prove that there was a grammar school at the time of Edward VI, who reigned from 1547 until 1553, financed by the Crown, through Stafford County. In 1588, the same year the English navy trounced the Spanish Armada, Queen Elizabeth I granted her second charter to Tamworth, part of which ordained that there should be a grammar school in the town, to be known as 'The Free Grammar School of Elizabeth, Queen of England in Tamworth', to serve local boys.

The school at that time was situated in Lower Gungate, exactly where our building is. A larger site was needed

## Demolished - for housing!

With many people having vested interests as to where the new location should be, an almighty row erupted, culminating in questions being asked in the House of Commons by Robert Peel, the 3rd Baronet and MP for Tamworth.

Many people were to have their noses put out of joint, but a solution had to be found. Upper Gungate was known in those days as Stony Lane and the Fountain Junction was called 'The Hand'. On the eastern side of the junction was a field known as 'The Swan's Nest', the site that was finally agreed upon. It was completed and opened in 1868, and so began a new era in Tamworth's education for boys.

The original school was then demolished. However, part of it remains and is incorporated in the light coloured building you see today. On the original building you can see pillars on the front. The upper section of these pillars, narrow plaster bricks, together with a plaster emblem, were included in the replacement building.

Look at Seams and Dreams, then slightly to the left, at the level of the first floor window sill. You will see the school emblem. The others then become obvious at the same level



## Thomas Guy

Thomas Guy was born in 1644 in Southwark, South-East London. His father, Thomas Guy Senior, was a Lighterman, Coalmonger and Carpenter with a wharf on the banks of the river Thames. His mother, Ann Voughton, originated from Tamworth.

In 1652 when Thomas was just eight years old and the eldest of three children, his father died suddenly. Thomas's mother returned the family to her home town of Tamworth. Thomas Guy was educated at Tamworth's Free Grammar School, located where Seams and Dreams stands today. In 1660, at the age of 16, he was apprenticed to John Clark, a bookbinder in London. Completing his 8 year apprenticeship, he set up business as a bookseller and publisher, success and fortune soon followed. In 1677 Thomas paid for the refurbishment of Tamworth's Free Grammar School.

The Almshouses were built in 1678 opposite the Grammar School, at a cost of £200. He also funded the Town Hall in 1701. Thomas Guy was elected to Parliament in 1695 and served the town as MP until 1708. When the people of Tamworth failed to re-elect him, angry at their ingratitude, he threatened to demolish the Town Hall and banned the people of Tamworth from his Almshouses.

Rejecting Tamworth, he turned his attention back to London where he personally financed the building of Guy's Hospital, Southwark in 1722. Thomas Guy died at home on December 27, 1724 after visiting the hospital site. He never got to see the project completed. He never married and left his £220,000 fortune to Guy's Hospital, which opened in 1725, and is where he was laid to rest.

## Tamworth Heritage Magazine

This is a great historical magazine about Tamworth. Seams and Dreams contributed an article in the Spring 2025 edition about our building, it's on page 23.