The Town Hall

Built in 1701, the original design consisted of a single room supported by 18 Tuscan style stone pillars. A decorative exterior staircase on the east side gave access to the first floor room, which also served as a platform for public announcements and events. In 1771 the exterior steps were demolished and 2 rooms were added to the rear on the East side. In 1811 these were replaced by 2 larger rooms, funded in part by the first Sir Robert Peel.

The area beneath the hall served as the Butter Market, and later housed the town's first fire engine. The turret in the centre of the roof was another later addition to the building. The domed cupola with ornate iron weathervane once housed a lantern and also contained a bell to summon fireman. The louvered side of the turret indicate that it may once have been used as a pigeon loft.

The clock on the front of the Town Hall was presented to the town by the then owner of Tamworth Castle, John Robbins, in 1812.

In 1968 restoration of Town Hall pillars and masonry took place.

The Town Hall is currently owned by Tamworth Borough Council. It contains the Mayors Parlour and is used for numerous events and civic functions.

Timeline

1644	Thomas Guy born in Southwark, London.
1652	Guy's father dies. Mother returns family to her home town of Tamworth.
1660	Guy is apprenticed as bookbinder to John Clark.
1677	Guy pays for new facilities at Tamworth's Free Grammar School.
1678	Almshouses built in Tamworth
1690	Guy first attempts election to parliament, but is defeated.
1692	Almshouses extended, men were housed as well as women.
1695	Guy is elected as MP for Tamworth, serving until 1707.
1701	Tamworth Town Hall built, completed 1702.
1708	Guy defeated for re-election as MP. Bans the people of Tamworth from the Almshouses.
1722	Construction begins on Guy's Hospital, London.
1724	Thomas Guy dies.
1725	Thomas Guy Hospital opens in London.
1771	Town Hall extended with additional rooms to the rear.
1811	Town Hall rear rooms further extended.
1812	Town Hall clock donated to the town by John Robbins, owner of Tamworth Castle.
1912	Original Almshouses demolished. Rebuilt on same site, completed 1913.
1928	Almshouses extended.
1936	Almshouses further extended.
1968	Town Hall pillars restored, completed 1974.
1995	New town bypass is named Thomas Guy Way in his honour.

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.

Welcome to Tamworth
THOMAS GUY'S
Town Hall & Almshouses

An introduction to the history of Thomas Guy.

Tamworth Borough Council

www.visittamworth.co.uk

Thomas Guy 1644 - 1724

Tamworth's famous 'incomparable benefactor' is responsible for two of the town's most historic buildings, the Almshouses and the Town Hall.

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 was Ann Vaughton, originally from Tamworth.

In 1652, Guy's father died suddenly. Now aged 8 years old, Thomas Guy is the eldest of three children. His mother returned the family to her home town of Tamworth. Thomas was educated at Tamworth's Free Grammar School that used to stand on Lower Gungate.

At the age of 16 in 1660, Guy was apprenticed to John Clark, a bookbinder in London. Completing his 8 year apprenticeship on 7th October 1668, Guy set up business as a bookseller and publisher. He obtains contracts to publish bibles for Oxford University and quickly becomes a successful and wealthy businessman.
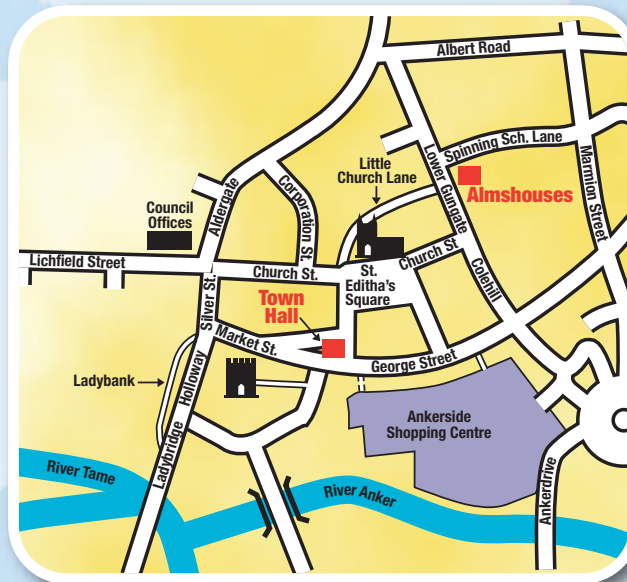
In 1677, Guy pays for refurbishment of Tamworth's Free Grammar School that he had himself attended as a child. He also gave a generous donation towards the building

of the Spinning School, after which Spinning School Lane is named. In 1678 Guy purchased land opposite the Grammar School and built the Almshouses. Guy later funds the building of the Town Hall in 1701.

Guy stood for election to parliament as MP for Tamworth in 1690, but was defeated. He stood again in 1695 and succeeded. He served the town as MP until 1707, when the people of Tamworth failed to re-elect him. Angry at the town's ingratitude for his generosity, he threatened to demolish the Town Hall and bans 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, at a cost of £18,793,16 shillings. Work began in 1722.

Guy died at home on December 27th 1724 after visiting the Hospital building site, and never got to see the project completed. He never married, and in his will he left £219,499 to Guy's Hospital, which opened in 1725. Much of Guy's charitable generosity did not become known until after his death.

Guy's Almshouses

The Almshouses on Lower Gungate were built in 1678, at a cost of £200. They provided housing for 7 poor women. Each residents has their own entrance and living room, and the large central garden was used to cultivate vegetables. The facilities also included a large library that housed the books of Reverend John Rawletts. In 1692 the Almshouses are extended to allow men as well as women to take advantage of the facilities.

The original Almshouses stood for 234 years, before being demolished in 1912. They were rebuilt on the same site in the 'Free Georgian' architectural style of the original. They were later amended and extended in 1928 and 1936, and have remained unchanged since.

After being rejected as MP for Tamworth in 1708, Guy banned the residents of Tamworth from the Almshouses. Those able to benefit from the Almshouses were restricted to his own relatives and people living in the outlying villages of Amington, Bolehall, Glascote, Hopwas, Wigginton and Wilnecote. This restriction is still in place today, with the stone plaque above the main entrance reading 'Guy's Almshouses for relations and Hamleteers'