

1 - The Assembly Rooms

Well here we are at the start of the Tamworth Bands Heritage Trail and where best to start it than the place where it all began, the **Assembly Rooms**, the place where **The Beatles** played in Tamworth. Here on the night of February 2nd 1963, John, Paul, George and Ringo played a blistering 20 minute set to a packed crowd of lucky local youngsters. **The Rolling Stones** also played here on December 12 1963 as did **The Hollies**, **The Tremeloes** and many, many more top acts. Now the home of the excellent **Skull Club** – once again the venue is alive to the beat of popular music.



2 - The Stable

If we turn around and look across the road we see a building that was known as **The Stable**. The outbuildings of the Tavern in the Town pub were a regular venue in 1980s with **Those Attractive Magnets** making their debut performance on May 23 1980. **Edward Ian Armchair**, Tamworth's punk poet also made his debut here – a performance lasting a mere 10 seconds



with his only words being “I walked into a lonely room, and saw the lonely people and suddenly...”

3 - The Tavern in the Town

To the left of The Stable is the **Tavern in the Town** itself. A very popular watering hole for many members of local bands in the late 70s and through the 1980s. Upstairs was the venue for **Tamworth Rock Festival Committee** meetings and of course, barman at the time, was **Rikk Quay**.



4 - The Drill Hall

Turning around and walking up Corporation Street past the taxi rank (once the bus station) on the left we come across the building now known as **The Phil Dix Centre**. In local band terms it was best known as the **Drill Hall** – several gigs took place here in the mid-1960s.

5 - The Tamworth Herald Offices

Continuing along to the end of the road, we carefully cross Aldergate and what is now **Touch Radio** and the **Champagne Indian Restaurant** were once the offices of the **Tamworth Herald** – home to two essential elements of the promotion and support of local music, the **Musicbox column** and of course Herald reporter and later Editor, **Sam Holliday**. No other individual can be said to have had a greater impact on the local scene in the period 1960 to 1990 than Sam. His contribution even outshines that of Vince Baker the man who brought the Beatles to the town. Sam would sit here in the Herald offices listening to the latest news from local band members or listening to their latest demo and he would always support, encourage and believe in their local talent.



6 - Rock-it Records

Carrying along Aldergate to the left of the Herald Offices, the building which is now the **Jalali Indian Restaurant** was once known as **Victoria Arcade** and housed **Rock-it Records** – a very popular record shop in the early 80s.

7 - St. John's Guildhall

Turning right into St. John Street and crossing to the left-hand side of the road we walk down the street with **St. John's Catholic church** on our left. If we enter the church gates and stand in front of the main doorway, to the right of the church was the site of **St. John's Guildhall**. This was the original venue of **St. John's Youth Club** and the scene of the debut performance by Tamworth's punk band **The Reliants** in April 1978 and the two nights of violence and mayhem featuring the band and the **Rikk Patrick Disco**, that became known as the “*Guildhall Massacres*”.



8 - St. John's Catholic Club

Exiting the church grounds by the bottom gate, we turn right, cross the road and continue along. **St. John's Catholic Club** is across the road on our right, popular venue of the **Johnny Slade Roadshow**. Continue through the alleyway to our left and exit in Ludgate.



9 - St. John's Youth Club

Cross the road and continue for 75 metres or so and on the corner of Moorgate we arrive at the location of what was **St. John's Youth Club**. This was the breeding ground for many local bands including **The Fretz**, **The Classified Ads**, etc. and debut performances by such noted local names as **Mark Mortimer** and **Donald Skinner**. It was also, by the way, where **Edward Ian Armchair** first attended school between 1966 and 1969.

BANDS Tamworth Heritage Trail



10 - Tamworth Progressive Club

We retrace our steps, back through the alleyway and turning right along Orchard Street and then right down Halford Street. Here we find the **Tamworth Progressive Club**. A popular venue in the late 60s and through the 70s with many local bands performing.

11 - Corvettes Wine Bar

Back up the road and turning right we eventually come to the junction with Lichfield Street. On the left on the corner is what was known as **Corvettes Wine Bar**. A venue of sorts which saw performances by among others **Emma Gibbs Loves Badges** and the **Anarchic Duo**.



12 - The Three Tuns and The Boot Inn

Crossing the road and walking down Lichfield Street we come to the **Boot Inn** and the **Three Tuns** – popular pubs with band members in later years.

13 - Espresso Bongo Studios

Walking down the road between the pubs and turning first right we come across the location of **Espresso Bongo Studios**. The place where almost every Tamworth band in the 1980s could be heard recording their demo tapes. With **Paul Speare** ever-supportive, bands of every musical genre came out of this tiny studio with a precious recording in-hand.



14 - Tamworth's Tower Blocks

Turning around and immediately in front of us is one of Tamworth's tower blocks – here there should be a blue National Trust plaque saying “*Rikk Quay lived here...*” – sadly not – one other notable resident, was local promoter **Ian Gibbons**. Walking back to Lichfield Street, if we turned left we would eventually come to **The Chequers** at Hopwas, a popular venue in the 70s and then continuing on we would reach **Lichfield**. Tamworth bands would often travel to Lichfield whose audiences had similar tastes to their Tamworthian cousins.



15 - Susanna's Night Club

Instead turn right, walking up to the traffic lights and turn right into Silver Street. If we continue down past the Castle Hotel on our left, at the end of the building we come to what was **Susanna's Night Club**. Named after the daughter of the then owners Mr. and Mrs. Norman Cartlidge, and opened in May 1971, this was Tamworth's first night-club. Many bands also played here but by the end of 1975 Susannah's had stopped booking bands and were promoting Northern Soul nights on a Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Later the venue was called **Stripes**.



16 - The Jolly Sailor

Continue down Ladybank, if we look into the far distance over the bridge we'll see the location of what was the **Jolly Sailor**. This was home to many different music clubs. There was a **Twist Club** there as far back as 1963, **The Crow's Nest** was a mod club opened in 1967 and various jazz and folk clubs used it as their regular venue. There was also a 'contemporary' music club in 1970 – **Jasper Carrott** played there. If we now turn left into the main entrance to the Castle Grounds and continue round the path with the car park on our right and over the bridge.

17 - Tamworth Rock Festival

Walk past the toilets and bowling green again on our right and we come on our left to the open-air location of the **Tamworth Rock Festival**. Well, what can be said? This is where all the top Tamworth bands of the 1980s played (usually in the rain!) to all the local pop and rock fans. Walk up the right-hand side of the children's playground alongside the tennis court and walk twenty-metres into the open ground, turn around and you'll be facing what was the stage. Just imagine **Wolfsbane**, **Spiral Eye**, **Breaking Point**, at least one band with **Mike Fleming** on board and many, many more. Just imagine... OK, let's back-track. Head towards the river, crossing the bridge taking you to the foot of Ankerside Shopping Centre. After crossing the bridge turn left.



18 - The Band Stand and the first Tamworth Rock Festival

Looking up at the **Band Stand**, this was the location of the very first open-air concert by Tamworth bands. This was August 1978, regular brass band concerts were held in the Castle Grounds' bandstand during the summer months but the then Manager of the Arts Centre, **Dave Armour**, wanted other bands to feature, hence, in August, **Flash Harry** – 06/08/78, **Ice** – 13/08/78 and **Brewster** – 20/08/78 all played in the Castle Grounds – the seed had been sown for the Tamworth Rock Festival.

Now take a look at the very grass on which you are standing, this rectangular area at the foot of the band stand was the scene of the very first **Tamworth Rock Festival**. On Easter Monday, 1979 you could see **Ice** – whose album “*Saga of the Ice King*” was on sale in local shops; **Brewster**, the country and western band – **The Ramblin' Band**; **Flash Harry** and **Asylum**. Admission was free and the fun kicked off at 12 noon. At the time Dave Armour suggested people “*bring something to sit on in case the grass was damp and light refreshments would be available*”.

19 - Ankerside Shopping Centre

Walk up the stairs to the right of the flower beds. On the 9th August 1980, Tamworth's one and only 'new romantic' electro-pop band **Those Attractive Magnets** entertained the shoppers in the Ankerside Shopping Centre. Supported by the **Buttercup Roadshow**, the band, then just a duo comprising **Rikk Quay** and **Andy Baldwin**, were raising money for local charities.



20 - Sir Robert Peel

Exit the Castle Grounds over the bridge by the Castle Gate House. For the **1986 Tamworth Rock Festival**, Tamworth's most famous political character **Sir Robert Peel** appeared on the official festival t-shirts. With the addition of mohawk haircut and shades, the founder of the modern-day police force helped to make this festival one of the most successful of all time. Walk down Market Street towards Holloway and turn right through the narrow King Street onto Church Street.

21 - Greens Records

On reaching Church Street, look to your right. **Greens Records** of Church Street (now **Bargain Booze**) was at one time THE place to buy the latest single or album release. John and Hazel Jackson who ran the shop in the 70's would help the avid record collector obtain that obscure release. In March 1978 they were embroiled in a chart-rigging scandal that rocked the record industry as the shop was one of the 'secret' selection of shops whose record sales went to form the Top 100 of the time.





22 - The Rathole / Lincolns

Once the **Monica Cafe and Milk Bar** in the 60s and 70s, **BonDs** became most famous as the location of **The Rathole** in the mid to late 1980s. Run by Clive Bartram, the **Rathole** was in fact in the rooms above what was then **Manhattans** and gigs were promoted by **Ian Gibbons**. Ian would book top indie bands and pair them with up and coming local bands. The venue most famously came to the rescue of the **1986 Tamworth Rock Festival** when torrential rain put a stop to the performances in the Castle Grounds only for all bands, equipment and fans to move en masse to the cramped and sweaty **Rathole** - what a night! Later known as **Lincolns**, top name bands continued to perform at the venue into the late 80s early 90s.

23 - The Tavern in the Town

On the corner of Corporation Street we once again reach **The Tavern in the Town** - time for a breather I think. Pop in for a pint of Carling or Guinness and look out for any regular drinker, simply mention the name **Rikk Quay** and see what they say. On leaving the pub, continue along Church Street past St. Edith's Parish Church on your left.



24 - The Stone Cross

At the end of Church Street we come across **The Stone Cross** - rumour has it that the **Rolling Stones** stayed here on the night of their performance at the Assembly Rooms on December 2nd 1963. Rumour also has it that **Mick Jagger** was banned for life for urinating up a wall!

25 - Tamworth Arts Centre

Next to the Stone Cross we have probably one of the most famous venues in the history of Tamworth bands. What was **Tamworth Arts Centre** (now the Register Office). Originally built as a theatre in the 18th century it later became a Baptist chapel before opening as the Arts Centre in 1975. The first band to play here were **Willow** on 1st October 1977. Tamworth punk band **The Reliants** held the crowd record in 1978. In later years, bands played downstairs rather than in the auditorium and the venue went on to host many wonderful, sweaty nights and became THE venue for local bands to play. If you turn around and now look down the road towards Colehill.



26 - Co-op Shop Doorway

Facing what was the Arts Centre we have the doorway to Tamworth's department store - the **Co-op**. This doorway would regularly be covered in vomit and urine as local musicians and fans vacated the Arts Centre after a thirsty nights entertainment. Let's now continue on down Colehill turning right into George Street.

27 - The George

100 metres up George Street on your right you come across what is now '**bar B79**' but what was for many, many years **The George** public house. A notoriously violent place it held regular Folk Nights from 1972 through to 1974 and then several rock bands also performed there. Continue up George Street past Woolworths on your right.



28 - The Marmion

Just past Woolworths we come to the narrow doorway of what is now **O'Keefs**. This was however the site of **The Marmion** public house. Opened in 1971, this was another somewhat notoriously violent drinking-hole. This was the venue for the first town centre residency for Tamworth's one and only 'punk DJ' **Rikky Patrick** (later **Rikk Quay**) - in 1978 he could be seen and heard here every Sunday and Thursday night. Now turn around and walk back down George Street.

29 - Lakins Night Club

Turn right at the bottom of George Street into Bolebridge Street and on the right at the end of the road we come to **Cloud 10** (Tamworth's lap dancing club where the girls have to keep their knickers on - by order of the local council!). This was the site of **Lakins Night Club**. During the late 1980s, the Tamworth music scene was so vibrant and busy that on some occasions there would be a band on at The Rathole, the Arts Centre and here at Lakins - all on the same night. Many top indie bands played here supported by a vast array of local talent.



30 - Tamworth Working Men's Club

Turning around and facing across the road - this was the site of **Tamworth Working Men's Club** (now J.D. Wetherspoons). It must be remembered that in the late 60s and early 70s there were literally no venues in the town. With the exception of the Assembly Rooms where large scale 'Beat Nights' had now finished, the only place a local band could play was at the local Working Men's Club. This venue saw many local bands perform from as early as 1963 right through to the mid-80s - regulars included the **Blue Hawaiians**, **Convention**, **Poetry and Rits**. Return up Colehill and continue past the Arts Centre on your left into Lower Gungate.



31 - Hamlets Wine Bar

On your left you now have the site of what was **Hamlets Wine Bar and Bistro** (now the **Sir Robert Peel** public house). Hamlets opened its doors for the first time on September 26th 1976 and went on to become the most popular meeting place for all those interested in the local music scene. In 1977 there was a **Folk Night** every Tuesday. In the 1980s the place would be heaving with members of every type of band you could imagine: heavy rock, indie, punk, electronic, goth - all taking in the friendly atmosphere created by **Bryan and Val Barnsley**. To this day, if you sit on the table facing the stairs and look up at the ceiling, you can still see the stain where the toilets leaked every night - liquid dripping into your Sam Smiths or bottle of Dog. Now continue along Lower Gungate.



32 - Prince of Wales

Just along from Hamlets, on the left past MenZair we have what was the **Prince of Wales** public house (now **Oliver's**). This has a history of being the venue for local Folk Clubs in the town. A jazz club existed in 1964, and the first folk club opened upstairs in 1965. More followed in 1967 and 1969 and in the mid-70s, **Andy Dwyer** one of the areas most successful folk artistes played here regularly. Again continue along Lower Gungate.



33 - Palace Cinema / Palace Media Centre / The Palace Venue

On your right we come to what is now the town's main music venue **The Palace - Venue**. This was of course once the **Palace Cinema** - opening in December 1976 and then the **Palace Media Centre**.



34 - The Globe Inn

And finally, just next to the Palace is the **Globe Inn**. Another regular venue having Folk Nights every Tuesday through 1977 to 1979.

And that's it, the end of the **Tamworth Bands Heritage Trail**, I hope you enjoyed this step back in time and felt a sense of where it all happened. If you now cross the road and follow it around to Tamworth Library you can make your way back to the **Assembly Rooms** and start all over again.



Find out more about the history of Tamworth Bands from 1960 to 1990

www.tamworthbands.com

Tamworth BANDS Heritage Trail

Follow in the footsteps
of Tamworth's bands
and relive the memories
from 1960 to 1990.



A 45 minute amble
through Tamworth's
musical heritage.

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