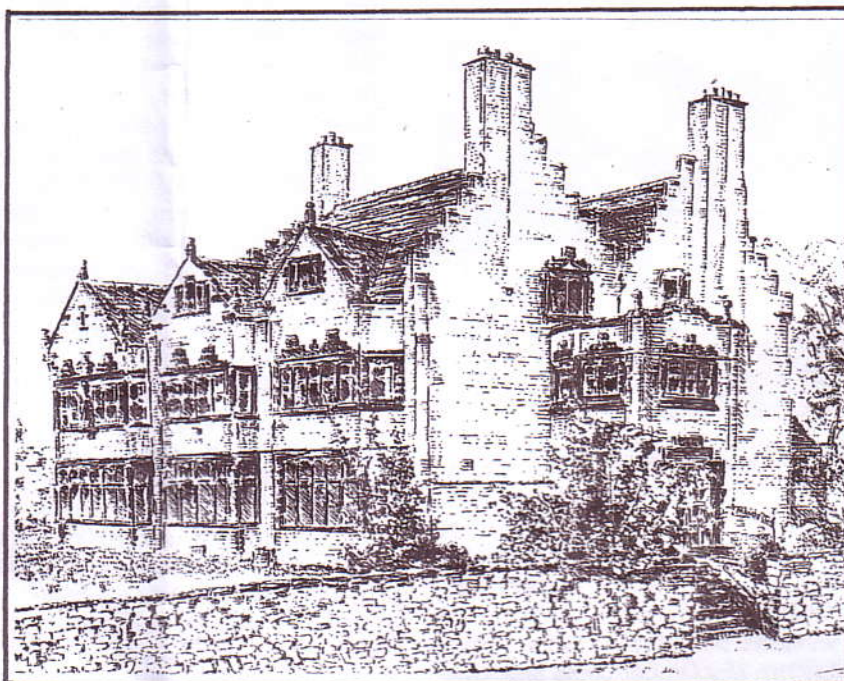


Bolehall Manor & Grounds

Amington Road, Bolehall, Tamworth B77 3LH

People travelling east from Tamworth on Amington Road, a major arterial route through Bolehall towards Amington, will soon be aware of a long sandstone wall, over two metres high in places, pierced by three openings, two vehicular accesses and a set of pedestrian steps through which can be seen the oak double doors into Bolehall Manor. The building is set back not more than five metres from the footpath in grounds that are bordered by Amington Road on the south, and by the River Anker and pasture land, once part of the Manor grounds, to the north. The former coach house and stables of an end-of-terrace house, Bolehall Cottage, are the western limit, and a relatively modern detached bungalow lies to the east.

An inscription carved in stone, above the entrance, says, "*Worlds Above And Worlds Below Mansions Are They All Of The Great Fathers House*", a sentiment befitting the residence of the Reverend William MacGregor, who had Bolehall Manor "remodelled" in 1891. Previously the land had housed a textile tape mill, belonging to the Bolehall Mill Company, owned by Charles Harding, on land leased from the Peel Estate. The first Sir Robert Peel had disposed of his interests in textile mills from 1818.



Because of debts run up by the 3rd and 4th Baronets, the family estate was sold off piecemeal from 1884.

Differences in the brickwork indicate that parts of an earlier Bolehall Manor, shown on an 1810 map, were incorporated into the house that MacGregor built for his retirement.

There is a mock Elizabethan feel, architecturally, about the unquestionably "new" south-facing aspect, i.e. above the main entrance, with stepped gables reminiscent of the

genuinely-Elizabethan Moat House in Lichfield Street. Rather surprisingly this elevation is not quite symmetrical, and is marred by an off-centre window and a modern fire escape door with a fibre-glass canopy.

The west-facing elevation is the only one worth admiration, with stone-mullioned bay windows on the ground floor. An 1884 map shows bay windows on an existing building i.e. before MacGregor rebuilt it. Amongst the first floor windows, is a carved statue

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of St. Andrew facing, so it is said, the spot where the Rev. MacGregor, England's most prominent amateur Egyptologist, asked his gardener to bury two rotting mummies. From the windows on this side of the house William MacGregor could see, over the railway embankment, the four tower pinnacles of St. Edith's church, where he had been Vicar from 1878 to 1887.

No doubt MacGregor used the access from the road alongside Bolehall Cottage as this would have given him the best view of his property - and a photo exists of him admiring this side of his house from a rowing boat on the River Anker - but this gate has been bolted shut for at least the past 30 years.

Sadly the addition of a brutal, featureless, single-storey, flat-roofed Function Room, after MacGregor's time, has destroyed this elevation.

Following his death on 14th December 1937 his executors sold Bolehall Manor and grounds, and other property including the terrace

of houses to the west that included Bolehall Cottage, to George and James Rose, Garage Proprietors. (Later, a Deed of Partition dated 4th May 1939, transferred sole ownership of Bolehall Cottage to James Rose, but he did not get vacant possession until nearly 12 years later because MacGregor's Will had stated that his housekeeper, Mary Ann Clarke, could live there rent-free for as long as she wished. She died there on 11th March 1949. Miss M. A. Clarke had been the second Matron of the Cottage Hospital, taking over from her Florence Nightingale-trained aunt, Matron of the hospital from its foundation in 1880.)

MacGregor's former home became Bolehall Manor Club Limited, incorporated on 8th August 1939. The original seven subscribers included two Bank Managers and two Chartered Accountants. In its early years the club was patronised by Tamworth's local worthies, its professional and business elite, with a long membership waiting list. Over the years the gardens, of

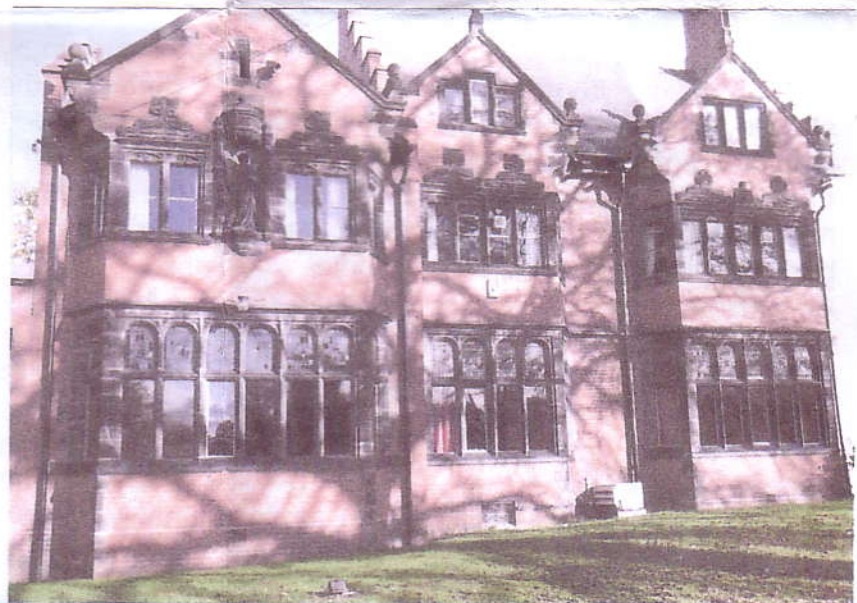
which MacGregor was proud, became too costly to maintain, or were of little interest to club members. A substantial part of the grounds - low lands suitable only as grazing - was sold off but with covenants restricting development. Moves are now afoot to sell off other areas, notably part of the Club car park, for housing, though to date only Outline Planning Permission has been granted.

Maps as late as 1957 show buildings on what is now the Club car park. Four terraced cottages with outbuildings, MacGregor Cottages, stood at the east end of the site. These were demolished in the early 1960s. The other two objects on the map between the Manor and these cottages are hints of previous Bolehall Mill buildings, marked "disused" on an 1890 map.

GARTH THOMAS, 11/12

Sources/Acknowledgments

Line drawing by Graham Tittley
 Tamworth Library
 Tamworth Borough Council
 Tamworth Herald
 Title Deeds of Bolehall Cottage



Tamworth Heritage Trust is a Registered Charity (no:1087773) that aims to make Tamworth residents and other interested parties aware of the history and heritage of this significant town. It aims to record our past, preserve what is good about the present, safeguard the future - and work towards the establishment of a permanent town centre Heritage Museum to house historical artefacts not currently on show to the public.

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