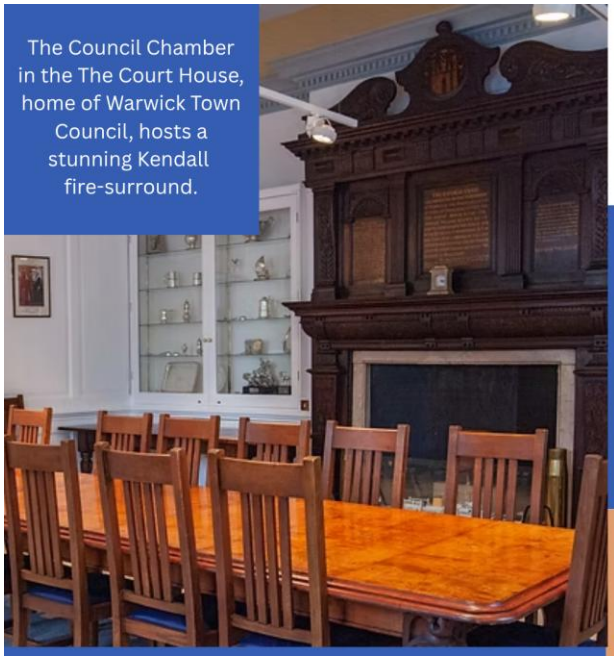
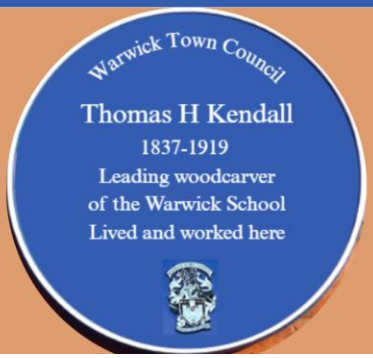
The Council Chamber in the The Court House, home of Warwick Town Council, hosts a stunning Kendall fire-surround.



To read more about the lives of those who have Warwick blue plaques, please visit the Town Council website: www.warwicktowncouncil.gov.uk/blue-plaques

Warwick Town Council
Blue Plaque Unveiling



Thomas Henry Kendall (1837-1919)



Thomas Kendall was one of Warwickshire's most respected Victorian woodcarvers. Born in Kineton, he was inspired to pursue carving after seeing work at Warwick Castle and visiting the Great Exhibition of 1851. He trained under the renowned carver James Morris Willcox and quickly showed exceptional talent, helping to create important pieces, such as the Charlecote House sideboard, while still an apprentice.

When Willcox died in 1859, Kendall's father purchased the workshop, allowing the 22-year-old to establish his own business in Chapel Street, Warwick. He retained several highly skilled craftsmen from Willcox's team and soon built a reputation for producing richly carved furniture, including sideboards, tables, chairs, mirrors and decorative objects. His clients included aristocrats, landowners and prominent families across the country.

Throughout the 1860s and 1870s, Kendall's reputation continued to grow. He exhibited at the 1862 International Exhibition in London, where he won two medals for woodcarving, and received further recognition at exhibitions organised by the Royal Society of Arts. Commissions came from notable patrons such as Sir Charles Mordaunt, the Earl of Jersey and the Marquis of Hertford.

One of the most significant moments in his career came in 1872 when he was commissioned by the Government to carve thirty-two decorative panels for the dining room of the House of Commons. Alongside domestic furniture, Kendall became highly regarded for ecclesiastical work, producing choir stalls, pulpits, lecterns, altar furnishings and other church carvings across Britain.

Kendall also enjoyed royal patronage. Members of the Royal Family visited his Warwick workshop, and he created presentation pieces for important royal occasions, including the marriage of Princess Mary of Teck and the future King George V.



Although he later diversified into successful wine and spirit and insurance businesses, woodcarving remained his passion. Poor health forced him to retire around 1910. When he died in 1919, traditional woodcarving was declining, but his legacy endured through the many surviving works in churches, historic houses, museums and public buildings throughout Britain.