

COVENTRY ARCHIVES: HOW TO TRACE YOUR FAMILY TREE



Lady Herbert's Almshouse, interior, 1936

Coventry Archives is located in the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Jordan Well, Coventry, CV1 5QP. Admission to both the Reading Room and Research Room is free. *Documents and books can be consulted without charge, but a charge is made for photocopying or the taking of digital images.*

Opening hours: Reading Room, 10.30 am – 3.30pm, Wednesdays – Fridays; 10.30 am – 3.30pm, alternate Saturdays (please check the Herbert website for Saturday opening days, e mail at: historycentre@culturecoventry.com or call the Archives on 024 76 237 583). All documents in the Reading Room are for reference purposes only and cannot be taken out on loan.

Opening hours: Research Room, 10.30 am – 3.30pm, Wednesdays – Fridays. An appointment system is in place to view original documents in the Research Room, and documents must be ordered by 3.30pm the previous day to your visit and a time arranged. Anyone needing to use original documents must bring proof of identity showing their name and address so that they can be issued with a special reader's

ticket. (The office is on the County Archive Research Network for reader tickets.) All material has to be consulted on the premises.

Undertaking your family history can be an absorbing pastime, but it may be difficult sometimes to see the wood for the trees. Listed below are some steps you might like to consider in your research, as well as resources available at Coventry Archives to help you.

When you embark upon your research, it is a good idea to create a family tree, starting with yourself and your own personal details - date of birth, etc. Then add any siblings and then your own mother and father. After that, add your grandparents and their details, if you have them. This helps you to visualise your family lineage, and organizes the facts you already have in a clear and more concise way. Talk to your oldest relatives, encouraging them to say where and when they think people were born and lived, whom they remember but you do not, and to go through their own old records, such as family Bibles with names in the front; this can take several sessions as relatives will often later recall something which they did not mention when you first asked them to help you. Tape recording reminiscences can supplement the notes you take.

When you have a basic outline, you can start to use the many resources that are now available to the family historian. Such as:

Births, Marriages and Deaths Index:

This registration of all births, marriages and deaths begins in 1837. Coventry Archives, for example, holds the index in microfiche form from 1837 to 2004. This particular version is arranged according to date. If you are uncertain of when a birth, marriage or death occurred, you can also find this register on **Ancestry**: in this version, you can search by name. Both the online and the microfiche versions are indexes only but you can use the reference alongside the entry to make an application for a copy of the relevant certificate. Certificates for Coventry people can be obtained from the Coventry Register Office:

Register Office
Cheylesmore Manor House
Manor House Drive
Coventry City Council
CV4 2ND

Telephone: 024 7683 3141
E mail: registeroffice@coventry.gov.uk
Online purchase of certificates: www.coventry.gov.uk/certificates

But remember that the administrative area of the city was much smaller in the nineteenth century – to see when a district came within the city, consult the guide entitled “Investigating the History of a Street or Locality”. Certificates for births and marriages should give you a person's parents' names, whilst those for deaths show the age of the deceased. Register Office records date back to 1837, and are held for the whole of England at:

General Register Office,
Trafalgar Road,
PO Box 2
Southport,
Lancashire,
PR8 2JD
Telephone: 0300 123 1837

Other national register offices are:

National Records of Scotland

The National Records of Scotland store records of births, deaths, marriages, civil partnerships, divorces, stillbirths - they're also responsible for the Scottish national archives, which contain government documents and public records.

The National Records of Scotland
New Register House
3 West Register Street
Edinburgh
Scotland
EH1 3YT
Telephone: 0131 314 4411

General Register Office for Northern Ireland

The General Register Office for Northern Ireland (GRO) is located within the Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency and is responsible for:

- the administration of marriage and civil partnership law
- the registration of births, deaths, marriages, civil partnerships and adoptions
- the maintenance of registration records
- the production of birth, deaths, marriage, civil partnership and adoption certificates on request.

NISRA

Colby House,
Stranmillis Court
Belfast
BT9 5RR
Phone: 0300 200 7890 (+44 300 200 7890 if outside the UK)
Email: gro_nisra@finance-ni.gov.uk

Census Records

From 1841, the census gives people's names, ages, occupations and places of birth with greater detail from 1851 onwards; the latest census available is 1911. It helps if you know fairly accurately where somebody was possibly living before you try to trace them on census. The Coventry Archives has comprehensive coverage.

Parish Registers

Parish registers are useful for any births marriages or deaths before civic registration began in 1837. Coventry Archives holds microfilm copies of these for Coventry and some other locations in the immediate area. Any registers not held at Coventry Archives should be available at Warwick County Record Office.

Warwickshire County Record Office
Priory Park
Cape Road
Warwick
CV34 4JS
Telephone: 01926 738959
E-mail: recordoffice@warwickshire.gov.uk

Remember that the handwriting gets harder to read the further back you go towards the start of parish registers in 1538, and that people moved about much more than we tend to think they did, so you may need to consult registers for several parishes.

A short cut towards discovering which parish registers will help you most is the International Genealogical Index (compiled by the Mormons) which lists alphabetically baptism- and marriage-entries (not burials) in parish registers; the microfiche copy in the Coventry Archives Reading Room will show everybody so far indexed who has the name you are researching within Warwickshire (remember to look for variant spellings – eg. “Hinman” will also appear as “Hendman”, “Hindman”, “Hyndman”, “Hynman”, etc. – and be prepared to decide if “Henman” or “Inman” is really relevant or not.

If the parish registers have disappeared or are illegible, try the copies of them called bishops’ transcripts: those for Coventry are at:

Lichfield Record Office
Lichfield Library
The Friary
Lichfield
Staffordshire
WS13 6QG
Telephone: 01543 510720
Fax: 01543 510715
E-mail: lichfield.record.office@staffordshire.gov.uk

But there are microfilms of the St. Michael’s and St. John’s parishes’ transcripts at Coventry Archives.

London Road Cemetery Records

When the cemetery opened, most people were buried there instead of in the churchyards. Coventry Archives has a database of burials from 1847 (when the Cemetery opened) until 1972. Each entry lists the occupants of a grave, their ages and addresses, and a site reference to indicate where the grave is located. For a further explanation see Coventry Archives’ “A Guide to London Road Cemetery Records”.

Trade Directories

For both Coventry and Warwickshire.

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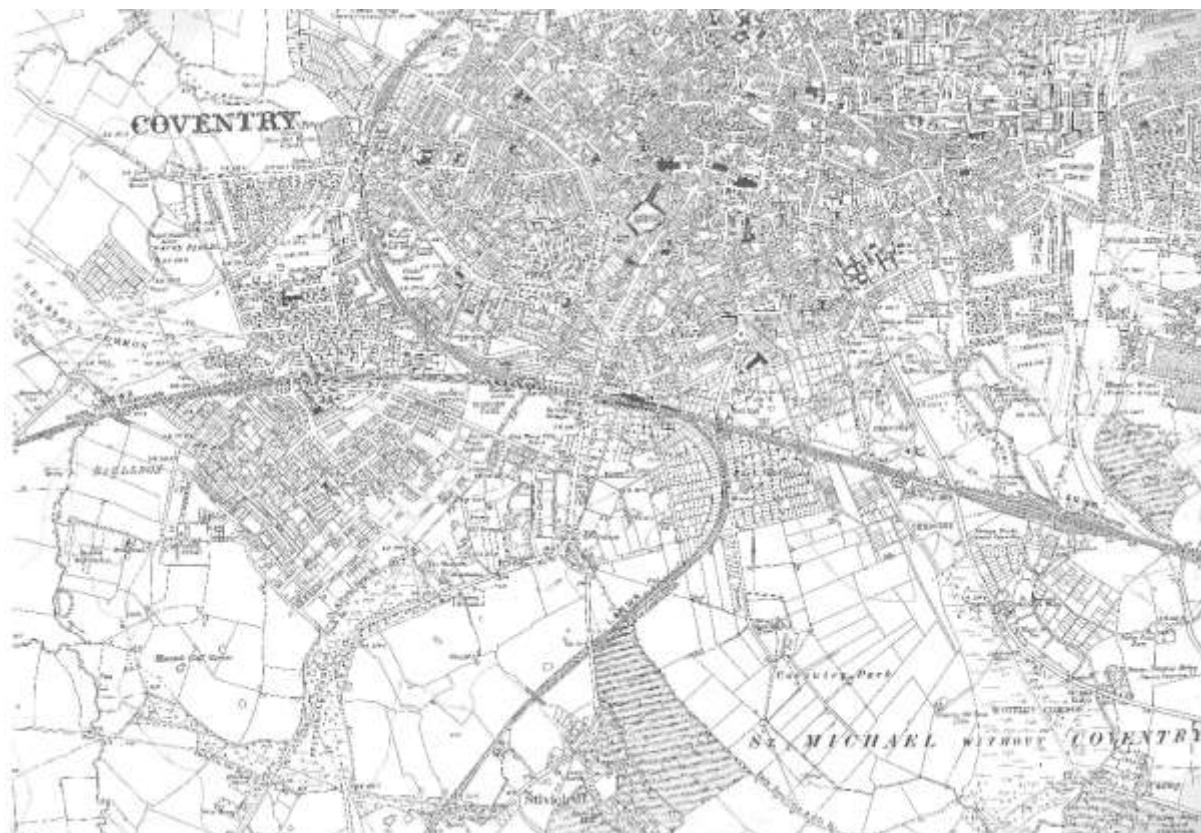
COVENTRY DIRECTORY

75 Milligan Wm baker & provision dealer	4 Chapman Thos	6 Patrick Thomas
76 Williamson Thos U cheist	5 Wade Mrs Eliza	7 Giles Arthur
77 Savage Geo Goodyer Mrs Ann grocer &c.	6 Timms Wm	LEFT SIDE.
78 Geo Mrs Anniesier and draper	7 Stringer Joseph	8 Giles Alfred
79 Taylor Chas H	8 Sidwell Walter	9 Baby Caroline
80 Spencer John B	9 Garrett Fredk wheelwright & blackfriar	10 Wiles Thomas H
81 Fenton Wm draper	Furneaux Thos G	11 Marston Miss Lucy
82 Parry H John	watch eng manfr	12 Smart Charles
83 Bates Jos	10 Oliver Harry	13 Holmes Geo
84 Douglass Mrs Emily (Mar is Wellington st.)	11 Garrett Mrs Jane	14 Patrick H
85 Johnson Caleb shopkeeper	12 Lloyd Geo clerk to	
	Freeman's Trustees (No. 2 Inclo)	
	13 Stukes Mair	
	14 Bayes Thos	
	(Here is Chapel st.)	
	LEFT SIDE.	
	1a Hutchins Mrs Mary A	
	2a Jennings Mrs Helen	
	3a Smout Thomas	
	4a Cluley Fredk T	
	5a Vickens Richard	
	6a Fisher Wm	
	7a Humphries Witz T	
	8a Hewitt Alecaus	
	Lee Harry coal merchant	
	Walter Mrs Hannah Haworth Geo	
	Walbers Thos Henfrey	
	139 LANSDOWNE ST.	
	RIGHT SIDE.	
	1 Holmes Geo	
	2 Rollason Arthur	
	3 Clay Jno	
	4 Heath Bob jun	
	5 Harris Geo	

Address side

Ordnance Survey maps

Covering most areas of the city from c. 1888.



Map of Styvechale, 1919

Pictures of Coventry

A database of photographs relating to Coventry and arranged according to subject.



Coventry Archives is always pleased to receive copies of dissertations, theses, articles etc. which have been written using material in our collections. We are also very keen to add to our collections through the deposit or donation of printed, written, film and other material relating to the history of the city

If you are interested in looking for original documents, take a look at our online database of collections at:

www.coventrycollections.org

Palace Yard, Earl Street, 1913

