



**HISTORY OF 38 - 39 BAYLEY
LANE**

THE COLLECTION

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. Visitors are required to make an appointment to view original documents in the Research Room. Material in the Reading Room is available without the need of an appointment.



Opening hours: The Coventry Archives Reading and Research Rooms are open, 10.30 am – 3.30pm, Wednesdays – Fridays; the Reading Room is open on alternate Saturdays, 10.30 am – 3.30pm. Please refer to the Herbert website at www.theherbert.org for further details, or telephone on 02476 237583.

INTRODUCTION

The Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, including the Coventry Archives, currently rests on the site that was formerly known as '38-39 Bayley Lane'. From being owned by wealthy merchants in the 14th century, to its tragic destruction in the Coventry Bombing of 1940, the resources within the archives allow us to explore such a culturally rich history of the museum's site.

ARCHIVE RESOURCES

Archival resources regarding 38-39 Bayley Lane can be found in the following collections / sub-collections.

CCA/2/3/1007 - Deeds relating to 38 & 39 Bayley Lane. Sub-collection of the CCA COVENTRY CITY COUNCIL collection.

CCG/CG/1/27 - Photographs of Bayley Lane after damage caused by the war. Sub-collection of the CCG Coventry City Council: City Treasurer's collection.

Local books / resources:

JN940.544 - Tim Lewis, *Moonlight Sonata*. Oral testimonies of the 1940 Bombing. Available in the Coventry Archives Reading Room.

HISTORY OF THE BAYLEY LANE ROAD

COVENTRY CASTLE

In the late 12th Century, the Bayley Lane area would likely have been part of a large ditch that surrounded and enclosed Coventry Castle. By the 13th century, however, the road had begun to emerge, most likely as a route through the castle bailey and outer court—hence its eponymous name 'Bayley Lane'.

After the Barons Wars in the 12th century, it seems that the castle was rarely used, and so the area began to develop as the city's main merchant hub. Following the expansion of St Michael's Parish Church in the 15th century especially, wool merchants, weavers and other traders would have been attracted to the growing hub of trade in the city centre, and so Bayley Lane began to form part of a wealthy merchant area in the late medieval period.

THE LEGEND OF LADY GODIVA

As we move further into the later centuries, Bayley Lane emerged additionally as part of Coventry's cultural centre.

The annual Trinity Street Fair, now known as the Lady Godiva procession, would have passed down Bayley Lane annually, namely due to its proximity to the cathedral.



Lady Godiva by John Collier, c. 1897,



The Godiva Procession, Bayley Lane, Coventry by David Gee (1867)

Dating from the late 13th century, the legend of Lady Godiva's nude procession first became celebrated in the late 17th century, and is depicted in numerous artworks from the 18th and 19th centuries.

38 - 39 BAYLEY LANE

With the area originally belonging to the Benedictine Priory (established by Leofric, Earl of Mercia and Lady Godiva in 1043), the exact dates of the property's construction are not known. It was most likely built in the early 14th century for a merchant, however its first known owner is Robert Allesley in 1410. As a girdler (a maker of belts), Allesley would certainly have benefited from the area's trading culture.

MEDIEVAL UNDERCROFT

As the only remaining part of the property, the Medieval Undercroft is located underneath the flat top area of the steps, outside the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum.

The Medieval Undercroft would almost certainly have been constructed for a wealthy merchant, as it would likely have been used for storage of goods and other valuables.



The Medieval Undercroft, one of many in Coventry, consists of a rectangular room with vaulted ceilings. Dating from the 14th century, the sandstone walls of the undercroft still consist of the original niches and indents, showing how certain areas would likely have been used as locked safes to store valuables.

When in the cellar, it is possible to see that there were once two separate entrances, one of which (the east stairs) is now blocked. In addition, it can be seen that windows (now also blocked off) were constructed, indicating that topography of the land once allowed for the room to be lit.



Picture taken within the Medieval Undercroft showing the vaulted ceiling and the now blocked off east staircase.

OWNERS OF THE 38-39 BAYLEY LANE PROPERTY

Throughout the property's history, we can see that it was principally occupied by merchants of various trades. From weavers to carvers to clothiers, many of the inhabitants in the pre-19th century history of the building would have made use of the Medieval Undercroft as storage for their goods.

Little is known about many of the earlier inhabitants, other than their trade and year of ownership. By 1410 the property was owned by the Benedictine Priory so at least the first few occupants were tenants. However we do not know when this would have altered but probably after the Reformation from 1517. Coming into the 18th and 19th centuries however, the owners of the property abruptly transform - overwhelmingly becoming inhabited by solicitors and their families, One of the last owners of the property, Rotherham and Co. Solicitors, is still in practice today in Coventry as one of the oldest legal firms in

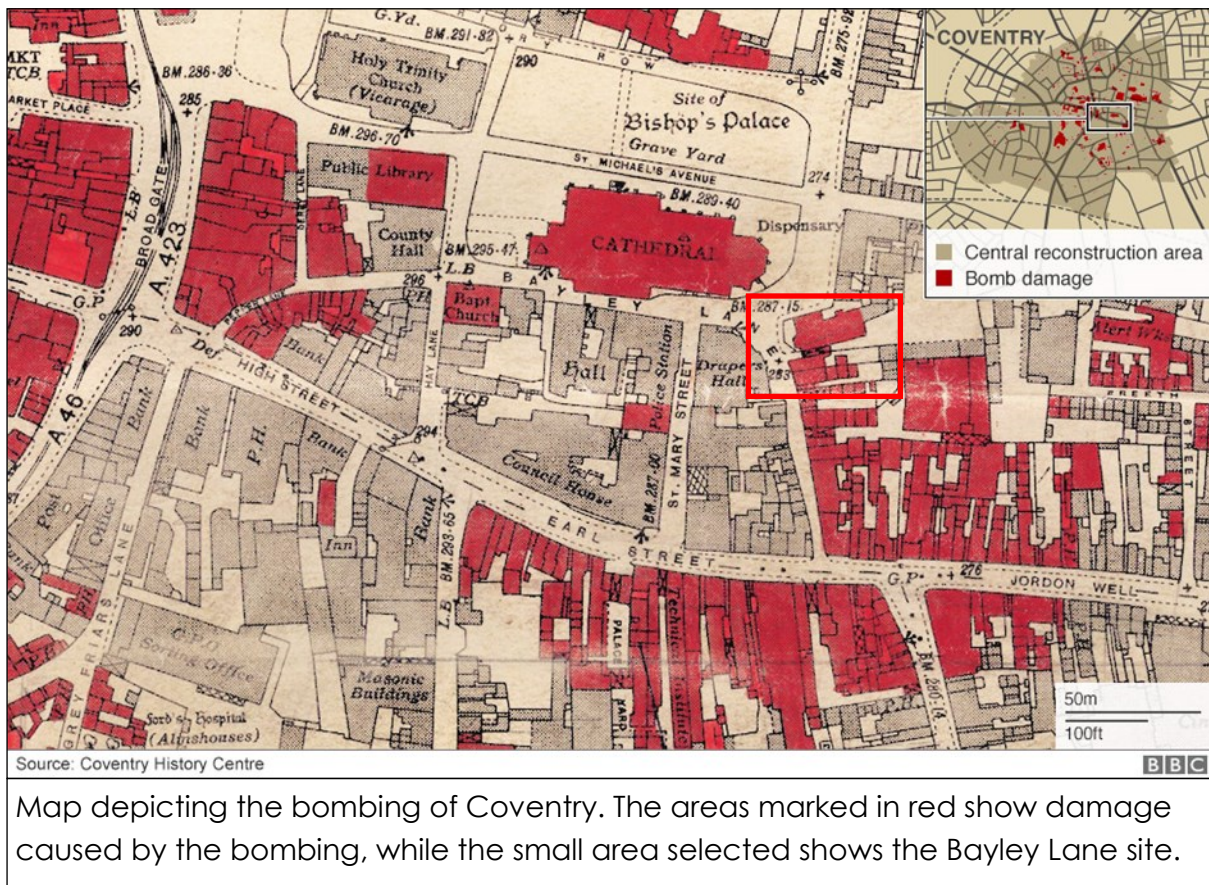
TENANTS/OWNERS TIMELINE

1410	Robert Allesley (Girdler)
1459	Richard and Margery Barnbrook (No trade specified)
1539	William Dampport (Clothier)
1539 c.	Thomas Damporte (Clothier)
1591 c.	William Worrall (Weaver)
1595	Thomas Holden (Mercer)
1595 c.	Thomas Steane (No trade specified)
1595	Peter Holden (Carver)
1610 c.	Samuel Masters (Master of the Weavers Company)
1610	Thomas Chambers (Weaver)
1611	Elizabeth Chambers (Wife of Thomas)
1657	Joseph Chambers (Son of Thomas)
1685 c.	

OWNERS TIMELINE (CONTINUED)

1743	Andrew Rice (Clothier)	→	<p>We know that Andrew Rice completed an apprenticeship within the clothier industry in 1713. By 1721, he was listed as a 'Master Weaver' on the apprenticeship census records, with apprentices of his own.</p>
1752 c.	Elizabeth Rice (Wife and widow of Andrew)		
<p>Building is formally split into two separate properties, 38 and 39.</p>			
1752 c.	Elizabeth Rice and other tenants, John Gilbert (Weaver) and other tenants		
1791	Charlotte Gilbert, daughter of John Gilbert		
1829 c.	John Freeman Taylor, husband to Charlotte (No trade specified)		
1841	Charles Woodcock (Solicitor)		
1850	Woodcock and Twist (Solicitors)		
1874	George Woodcock (Solicitor)		
1894	Woodcock and Co. (Solicitors)		
1911-12	No 38 Rotherham Solicitors and No 39 Priory Temperance Hotel		
1931	Rotherham R. A and Co. (Solicitors)	→	<p>Still in practice in Coventry today as one of the oldest legal firms in Britain! The papers relating to Rotherham RA and Co. are available in the Coventry Archives under the classifications PA171 and PA466.</p>
1940	Destroyed in the Coventry Bombing raid		
1944	Albert Henry Jarrard (Solicitor)		
1950	Coventry corporation		

BOMBING OF COVENTRY



On the night of November 14th 1940, 515 German bombers struck Coventry. As the heaviest bombing raid launched so-far by the Germany Army, not only were many lives lost, but the city of Coventry saw 56% of its houses damaged or destroyed, with many struck directly or receiving fire damage. 38-39 Bayley Lane was one of such properties damaged by fire, due to the intense bombing of the neighbouring Coventry Cathedral.

Oral testimonies from those who lived through the Blitz depict not only scenes of terror, but of humanity and solidarity between neighbours, friends, and even strangers. The residents of Bayley Lane would have taken solace within their nearby air raid shelter, likely that of St Mary's Guildhall.



Image depicting the damage caused to 38-39 Bayley Lane.

1950 ONWARDS...

In 1944, Albert Henry Jarrard, as executor of his partner Richard Alexander Rotherham, acquired the deed to the properties of 38-39 Bayley Lane, which were, previous to the bombing, acting as the office site for Rotherham RA and Co. Jarrard wished to rebuild and restore the property, however the Coventry Corporation declared the building a 'total loss' and refused his planning requests.

Jarrard subsequently submitted a purchase-notice under the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947, which requested that the corporation bought him out for the property. As a result of this, the Coventry Corporation purchased the site from Jarrard, paying him £3750 compensation in November 1950. £3750 in 1950 was a hugely significant amount, especially for war

£3,750 in 1950 → £129,345.84 in 2020

UK Inflation Calculator

Amount	Start year	End year	Calculate
£ 3750	1950	2020	

Inflation from 1950 to 2020

Cumulative price change	3,349.22%
Average inflation rate	5.19%
Converted amount (£3,750 base)	£129,345.84

THE MUSEUM TODAY



Prior to the Second World War, Coventry philanthropist and industrialist Sir Alfred Herbert donated £100,000 to the city of Coventry to pay for the construction of an art gallery and museum. Halted by the war, building work did not officially commence until 1954, when Sir Alfred laid the first foundation stone of the new building—on the site that was previously known as 38-39 Bayley Lane. Sadly, he did not live to see the museum's opening in 1960, however, it continues to operate in his name.

The museum now stands as a proud representative of Coventry's heritage and history, housing not only the Coventry Archives, but galleries ranging from the art of the Old Masters, to 19th century women's wear.