



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 also 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

Like many other areas of Britain at the outbreak of war in 1914, large numbers of men enlisted in Coventry. Appeals for the able bodied young men of Coventry were featured in all the local newspapers before the first week after war was declared. By 21 August around 400 men had answered Lord Kitchener's call and enlisted at Coventry's new recruiting office at the Masonic Hall in Little Park Street.

The Territorials of the 7th Royal Warwickshire regiment, mostly Coventry men were at their annual summer training camp at Rhyl in North Wales on 4th of August 1914, when the orders were received to turn around, return to Coventry and prepare for mobilization. Men and horses of C section, Warwickshire Royal Horse Artillery left their base at Smithford Street barracks around this time as well, and took the road to Leamington to meet up with their comrades in other Warwickshire batteries. Within a week, the 4th South Midland Howitzer Brigade, Royal Field Artillery, another unit with many Coventry men in it, had followed the Territorials. It is estimated that around 35,000 men came from Coventry to take part. Officially 2,600 didn't return¹ although the true number is probably much higher.

¹ McGrory, David, *Coventry and the Great War* Amberley Publishing 2016. pg 7.

For Coventry's manufacturing companies, the initial rush to the recruiting office was problematic. The speed with which war had come had left many of them, particularly those with a strong export business, struggling to cope with new uncertainties and a reduced workforce. Many reacted in different ways. While Alfred Herbert Ltd advertised in local papers to request their workmen to join up, Siddeley-Deasey gave their workforce a formal discharge and ordered them to join up. For other companies the war provided a new manufacturing avenue; Daimler for example was one of the first manufacturers to develop the motor omnibus.

As demand grew for vehicles, it was reported that around ten buses a week were being shipped from London to the front line. Coventry supplied an array of vehicles, bombs and other weapons over four and a half years towards the war effort. Coventry was also one of the first in the area to raise money for the Belgian Relief fund. The Mayor Siegfried Bettman, was instrumental in arranging for Whitley Abbey to be made habitable and opened up for refugee use in 1914. By the end of the war up to 2,000 people had made their home in Coventry.

Coventry was a changed city, as were many of the inhabitants who survived after this period of conflict. Committees for memorials were set up during early 1919. Temporary memorials were erected at Foleshill and Spencer Park, which would become the War Memorial Park when a permanent memorial was unveiled in 1927.

Resources:

City Council records:

Copies of the minutes of the full Council are printed and available on the Coventry Archives research room shelves. The minutes of the Council's committees are available but need to be ordered using document request slips. The First World War is best followed in the council and committee minute books and City Secretary's Department correspondence files (CCA/3/1). CCA/TC/4/8 is the minute book of Council sub committees for civil and military relief during the War and CCA/TC/4/9 the minute book of the Local Committee of the Incorporated Soldiers and Sailors Help Society in 1915-1916. See reference CCB/1/34/9 for details of Rolls of the fallen.

Private donations and deposits:

PA394	A. P. Pridmore - gift of clock to the city, 1916.
PA406	F. Harvey - letter, 1918.
PA453	Baginton estate, Warwickshire - sales particular, 1918.
PA590	Town Hall - plans, 1919.
PA615	World War One - "The Western Front" (map), 1916-1919.
PA742	Ordnance Works - railway siding, 1917.
PA742	Stoke Common - railway sidings for Coventry Ordnance Works, 1917.
PA859	T. F. Tickner - newspaper cuttings, etc., 1916-1924.
PA977	Aliens, register of, for 35 Trentham Road (Francois family), 1915-1917
PA1091	Earlsdon - abstract of title for Styvechale Avenue district, 1918.
PA1102	C. Roper - certificate of appreciation of patriotism, 1919.
PA1175	Bailey family, 1914
PA1178	World War One - registration cards, etc., 1915-1918.
PA1299	Fulham family, 1901-1920.
PA1324	T. H. Lea and V. Lines - marriage, 1919.
PA1328	Salonika, war service in, 1915-1918.
PA1334	Empire Day certificate, 1915.
PA1405	Rationing, 1918.
PA1415	A. Morton - ration book, 1918.
PA1491	Longford Fire Brigade - minutes, 1916-1920.
PA1710	Coventry Fortress Company - notes, 1915.
PA1904	J. Hewitt, emigrant - papers, 1919-1921.
PA1975	World War One – concert programme, 1916.
PA2006	World War One – Iliffe & Sons war memorial (photograph).
PA2068	World War One – concert poster, 1918.
PA2110	World War One – list of certified occupations, 1917.
PA2193	World War One – Keene family, 1914-1918.
PA2209	Foleshill war memorial, 1919.
PA2321	Autograph books, 1916-1924
PA2321	World War One Autograph Books 1916-1924
PA2382	Alford Papers, 1914-1919
PA2519	Sherbourne House, Butts – photograph, 1914.
PA2728	P.E. Satchwell – war service discharge certificate, 1919.
PA2834	Egyptian Expeditionary Force – photograph album, 1916-1919.
PA2890	Webb family – photographs, 1910-1920.
PA2939	World War One – wounded soldiers' outing, 1916.
PA3042	Glover, Fred – Diary of, 1915 (Gallipoli)

Ask to see the online catalogue *Coventry collections* or the printed finding aids in the research room for the above "private accessions" to gain more details.

Books and pamphlets:

Harkin, Trevor, *War memorial park*, [book] JN 940.465
Harkin, Trevor, *City of Coventry; photographs of those who served in the Great war*, [book] JN 940.3
Harkin, Trevor, *Earlsdon at war*, [book] JN 940
Daimler, *Munitions of War*, [book] AB 670
McCrory, David, *Coventry and the Great war*, [book] JN 940.342948
Coventry through time series, *Written in red: Coventry in the First World War* [pamphlet] JN 940.3
A short history of the Royal Warwickshire regiment [pamphlet] AB 355
City of Coventry, *Celebration of peace 1919* [pamphlet] JN 940.3

Newspapers and news cuttings:

Coventry Graphic [A card index is available for all fallen soldiers]
Why the war lasted so long Midland Daily Telegraph 11 April 1919
Coventry War Memorial 31 October Midland Daily Telegraph 1919
War time industry 1916 JN 331.8
Zeppelin raid on Birmingham and Coventry JN 940.449
Royal Warwickshire regiment, 7th Battalion War Memorial, JN 940.465

Other places which hold local archives and information:

Warwickshire County Record Office [for parish records and some Quarter Sessions]
Priory Park
Cape Road
Warwick CV34 4JS
Telephone: 01926 738959
Email: recordoffice@warwickshire.gov.uk

For **National records** contact the following:

National Archives, Ruskin Avenue, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DU
Telephone: 020 8876 3444 ext.2350;
Email: enquiries@nationalarchives.gov.uk

Department of Documents and Sound, Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road,
London SE1 6HZ
Telephone: 020 7416 5220/1/2/3;
Email: <https://customerportal.iwm.org.uk/contact-iwm/>

National Army Museum, Royal Hospital Road, London SW3 4HT
Telephone: 020 7730 0717 ext.2222;
Email: info@national-army-museum.ac.uk

National Museum of the Royal Navy
HM Naval base (PP66), Portsmouth, PO1 3NH
Telephone: 02392 727 562
Email: <https://www.nmrn.org.uk/contact-us>

Department of Research and Information Services, Royal Air Force Museum,
Grahame Park Way, Hendon, London NW9 5LL
Telephone: 020 8358 4873;
Email: london@rafmuseum.org

Royal Army Medical Corps Muniment Collection, Wellcome Institute for the History
of Medicine, 183 Euston Road, London NW1 2BP;
Telephone: 020 7611 8888;
Email: archives+mss@wellcome.ac.uk