

## 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](mailto: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](mailto:registeroffice@coventry.gov.uk)

Online purchase of certificates: [www.coventry.gov.uk/certificates](http://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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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.

76 COVENTRY DIRECTORY.		COVENTRY DIRECTORY.		77	
75 Milligan Wm baker & provision dealer	4 Chapman Thos	6 Patrick Thomas	5 Griffiths Albert	( <i>Here is Eagle st.</i> )	8&9 Sumner Jas pork butcher & watch repairer
76 Williamson Thos Uche dist	5 Wade Mrs Eliza	7 Giles Arthur	6 Wilcox Roland	Dodd John	10 Rathif Wm the Excors of, brewers Coventry Brewery
77 Savage Geo	6 Timms Wm	LEFT SIDE.	7 Austin Alfred	Sheasby Hy	11 Bland Major Fredk M
Goodyer Mrs Ann grocer &c	7 Sturgeon Joseph	8 Giles Alfred	8 Ward Wm H	Cox Chas	12 Stone Arthur
78 Geo Mrs Annhosier and draper	8 Sidwell Walter	9 Baby Caroline	9 Butler Geo J, Wesleyan and Genl Assurance Society Asst Snpr office	Harris Jno	13 Kelsey John
79 Taylor Chas H	9 Garrett Fredk wheelwright &c Beechcroft Furneaux Thos G watch cap manfr	10 Wiles Thomas H	10 Turner Miss Ada	Wilson Edwd	14 Fellows Miss Ann
80 Spenser John B	11 Garratt Mrs Jane	11 Murston Miss Lucy	11 Osborne Thos	Hands Wm H	15 Osbourne Joseph greengrocer Miss M Osbourne milliner
81 Fenton Wm draper	12 Lloyd Geo clerk to Freeman's Trustees (No. 2 Incho)	12 Smart Charles	12 Chatwin Henry	Roberts Joe	16 Batchelor Wm H "Hop Pole" Court
82 Fern H John	13 Holmes Geo	13 Holmes Geo	Hall Alfred	Barber Jos	17 Blackford Wm
83 Bates Jos	14 Patrick Hy	14 Patrick Hy	Shaw Isaac	Lellan Joe H	18 Gibbs Wm Jas
84 Douglas Mrs Emily ( <i>Here is Wellington st.</i> )	149 - LEICESTER CAUSEWAY (Hansall Lane.) RIGHT SIDE. ( <i>Here is Little Church Street.</i> )		Lines Jas	Lee Mrs Hannah	19 Cullum Saml LEFT SIDE. ( <i>Here is Drapery st.</i> )
85 Johnson Calah shop-keeper	Broadhurst Mrs Eliza		Shaw James	Burden Harry	17 Underwood James
86 Hewitt Alfred	Lombard David		Clark Alfred	Hirons Wm	18 Barnwell Job Canal Office
87 James Th mas	Gilbert John		Fairbrother Eli	Perrutt Geo H	
88 Tuckey Wm H	Haycock Mrs Sarah A		Vangban James	Cox Alfred	
89 Hall Benjamin Mrs Hall laundress	2a Jennings Mrs Helen		Atkins Thos plasterer	Turrall Ernest	
90 Whitehouse Jas Court.	3a Mount Thomas		Parsell Mrs Eliza	Raven Fred	
91 Bonham John F B baker & provn dr	4a Claley Fredk T		Orms cottages	Clarke Chas	
92 Tait Wm greengrocer	5a Vickers Richard		Dean Geo	Johnann Benjamin	
93 Payne John ironmonger & bootmaker	6a Fisher Wm		Baton Edward	Callow Edwd	
94 Fletcher W & R Ltd butchers	7a Humphries Wm T		Cooke Jno Ed	Ashury Frank	
95 Parkes Wm pork butcher baker & dairymann	8a Hewitt Alceaus Lee Harry coal merchant		Levin Edward	Mortiboyas Thos W ( <i>Here is Springfield Road.</i> )	
96 Smith Edward "Primrose Hill Tavern"	Walker Mrs Hannah Hawthorne Geo		Outons Jno	141 - LEICESTER ROW. RIGHT SIDE.	
135 - LAMB ST. RIGHT SIDE.	Walders Thos Henatey		Myles Jos	1 Woodward W grocer	
2 Amos E maund	139 - LANSDOWNE ST. RIGHT SIDE.		Clay Benben market gardener ( <i>Here is George St.</i> )	2 Vickers Jos Benben watch manufacturer "Old Wheel"	
3 Barnett Jno	1 Holms Geo		LEFT SIDE. ( <i>Here is Stoney Stanton Rd.</i> )	3 Neal Wm H hairdresser	
	2 Rollason Arthur		Jakeman Robt market gardener	4 Bonham Mrs Cath "White Bear"	
	3 Clay Jno		Lambert John L	5 Payne Jno "Canal Tavern" Court 1.	
	4 Heath Robt jun		Bragg Wm	6 Watson Harriet newsagent	
	5 Harris Geo		Griffiths Jesse	7 Hannah Walter J tobacconist	
			Picking Ernest W		
			Clowes Wm		
			Cummings Wm		
			Harris Wm		
			shopkeeper		

Pages from a Coventry Trade Directory, 1874

## Nonconformist Records

See "Notes for Genealogists" for the current holdings and how to trace other documents.

## Wills

When you know the date of death of somebody whom you think might have a will, contact Lichfield Record Office for local wills to 1857; for wills from 1858, try:

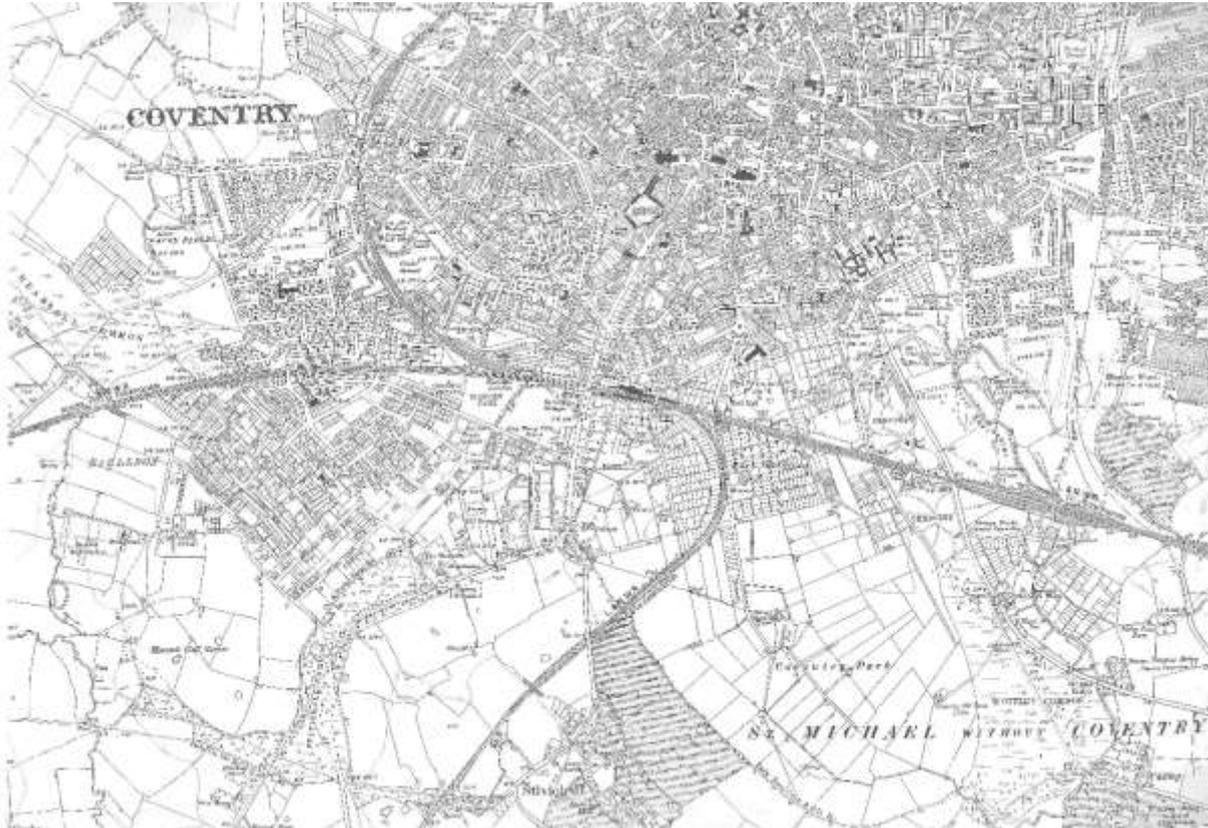
Principal Registry of the Family Division  
 First Avenue House  
 42-49 High Holborn  
 London WC1 6NP  
 Telephone: 020 7947 6000

## Newspapers

Microfilm copies of the Midland Daily Telegraph (Coventry Telegraph), Coventry Standard, Coventry Herald, Coventry and Warwickshire Graphic

## 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](http://www.coventrycollections.org)**

*Palace Yard, Earl Street, 1913*

