**Ford’s Hospital**

**Guide to records**

**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 Coventry collections online catalogue at <http://coventrycollections.org/> or further details, or telephone on 02476 237583.

**Introduction to subject**

Ford’s Hospital, a Grade 1 listed building located on Greyfriars’ Lane, was built between 1509-17 as an almshouse for the poor. It was founded by William Ford, a wealthy wool merchant and former mayor of Coventry. It was originally built as a permanent residence for five elderly men and one woman.

In 1517, the premises were enlarged to accommodate six men and their wives, thanks to donations from William Pisford. The building was therefore known as Pisford's Hospital for a time. It was extended a third time in 1529, providing housing for eleven elderly couples, who were given a weekly allowance. An inscription of the foundation can be seen on the walls, which states that 'Mr William Ford [...] founded this Almshouse', and each couple was given 'sevenpence halfpenny a week'.

The half-timber building was erected on the site of a chapel within Greyfriars Friary. When it first opened, funds were provided for a priest who lived in the hospital and used the adjoining chapel. Excavations of the building in 1940 revealed a fourteenth century tiled floor, with one tile depicting a black eagle - the symbol of the Earl Leofric of Mercia. This suggests that the chapel at least was associated with the Greyfriars Priory.

From the 1800s, Ford's Hospital became a home for women only. According to a Coventry Historian, in 1846 it was serving 40 women who each received an allowance of three shillings and six pence per week. The 1851 census records that many of the women had been silk workers, and there was also a former nurse, charwoman, shopkeeper and schoolmistress.

On October 14th 1940, at a quarter past midnight, the building suffered a direct hit from a bomb, killing the warden, a maid and six female residents. The restoration process began in 1953 after a public appeal for subscriptions. There had been a cottage to the left of the Hospital, used for additional accommodation, but this was not saved. It took 13 years, using original timber and brick saved from the bomb site. Rootes Horticultural Society carried out the rebuiding, and the gardens were laid out and maintained voluntarily.

It is considered a significant example of domestic early modern architecture, with a narrow courtyard inside the building and a garden. When Shakespeare's Globe was reconstructed in London, designers studied Ford's Hospital to help understand Elizabethan doorways. It also featured in a 2006 episode of *Doctor Who* called 'The Shakespeare Code', along with a number of other historic buildings in Coventry.

By 1966, the accommodation was replanned for modern standards - becoming 7 flatlets each with a bathroom, small kitchen and resident warden. A leaflet from the 1950s states the building was open to the public 'daily from 11-7pm', but it can now be visited by appointment only. The beautiful structure can be viewed easily from the outside, and is now a scheduled ancient monument.

**Archival Material**

PA1714 – COLLECTION – Bond’s and Ford’s Hospitals and Church Charities – includes hospital registers of applicants, pay books, clergy books, visitor’s books, surgeon’s books

BA/D/11 – Ford’s Hospital (Corporation Charity Records)

PA500/10-12, 14-18 - Ford's Hospital (charity records)

PA9 - FORD'S HOSPITAL AGREEMENT 1528

PA54/280/1 – Memorandum - That William Ford of Coventry had willed that an almshouse should be built for five poor men, with a woman to care for them, receiving 5/- per week, to service which lands worth 20 marks should be bought, naming William Pisford as an executor; that William Pisford built the almshouse in Greyfriars' Lane, early 17th Century

BA/H/17/F8/1/112 – order for surveying Ford’s hospital - 30 Oct 1751

PA1217/5/7/1/1,2 – Letters about access to the chapel from Ford's Hospital during divine worship, 1813

PA541/1 – Draft lecture on Coventry architecture, read to the Architectural Association, featuring the Priory, the Cross, Saint Mary's Hall, Charterhouse, Greyfriars', the Bond's Hospital grouping, the Freeschool and Ford's Hospital, 1853

PA1/5/68 - 'Room in Ford's Hospital', mid 19th century sketch

PA159/4/9 - Rough notes about William Ford and the hospital founded by him, early 20th century

PA1855/2 - Photographic copy of original photograph of Coventry taken by William Stanley Charnell in about 1913: courtyard of Ford's Hospital, with woman sitting near entrance, 1913

CCA/3/1/5362 - File relating to closure of almshouse account for Ford's Hospital, Greyfriars Lane, Coventry, and proposal to transfer the resulting funds of the Corporation sale of the West Orchard almshouse buildings and other, to the Church (Municipal) Charities Trustees so as to benefit the Hospital, 1932-33

PA1734/4/9 - Postcard of Greyfriars Hospital or Ford's Hospital, Coventry, Nd [1910 - 1940?]

CCG/CG/1/157/7 - Photograph of bomb damage to Ford's Hospital, Greyfriars Lane

CCA/3/1/7965 - File relating to Ford's Hospital restoration after air raid damage, under the Ancient Monuments Act: discussions between the Corporation and the Hospital Trustees, financial assistance sought from the War Damage Commission, 1904 -41

CCA/3/1/8077 - File relating to Old City Wall (near Upper Well Street), Ford's [Greyfriars] Hospital and various other old Coventry buildings: bomb damage restoration details and progress, and question of related City redevelopment scheme planning amendments, 1943-44

PA1691/5/11 - Notes and drawing regarding Ford's Hospital, 1509-1940

PA1714/25/1-2 - Watercolours of Ford's Hospital by Mr H Chapman, Nd [1950s?]

PA2409/5/1/12 – Ford’s Hospital restoration appeal, 1950

CCA/3/1/11174 - File relating to Planning and Redevelopment: Ford's Hospital postwar restoration and question of boundary walls; proposed exchange of land between the Corporation and the Hospital Trustees – 1952-1953

PA488/12/1/9 - [19.00.] From C.F. Redgrave to R.H. Pogson explaining a plan [not herewith] which would allow for use of the site by Eventide Homes, Methodist Homes [for the Aged] and Ford's Hospital, October 1964

PA2398/2/3/1/32 - From [E.H. Foottit] to A. Harris about the architect Claud[e F.] Redgrave's awareness of how construction of elderly people's flats [Eventide Homes - see PA488/12/1/1 for memorandum and articles of association] would affect the Ford's Hospital garden, August 1965

PA2398/2/3/1/25 - From D.R. Turner (honorary secretary, Ford's Hospital Garden Project, Greyfriars' Lane, Coventry; himself of 124, Nuffield Road [,Courthouse Green], Coventry) to P.H.V. Twist explaining the scheme, and the present position and future developments, 1965

PA2398/2/3/1/13 - Aide-Memoire - [Jun 1965.] By E.H. Foottit about Lady Herbert's Gardens and Ford's Hospital

PA2398/2/3/1/118 – Copy Letter - From [E.H. Foottit] to A. Harris which enclosed a copy of PA2398/2/3/1/113 and rehearsed correspondence about Ford's Hospital garden, 1966

PA2398/2/3/1/155 – Newspaper Cutting - About Ford's Hospital becoming part of a precinct of old people's homes, 1966

PA1714/24/2-3 - Photographs of building work in the gardens at Ford's Hospital, Nd [1980s?]

PA1691/2/2/2 - "History of Coventry" in subject order: 'A', Ford's Hospital, including photographs, 1500-1980

CCE/8/1/1/224 - 'Ford's Hospital' leaflet by E Castle, 1992

**Pamphlets**

JN362.6 - Ford's Hospital Coventry in The Builder, 1847

JN362.61 - Coventry Standing Conference of Women's Organisations: Ford's Hospital, 1510-1955 (mentions that the 'building is open to the public' daily from 11-7pm)

JN362.6 - Christmas card with illustration of interior courtyard of Ford's Hospital

JN362.6 - Coventry's Almshouses - Administered by Coventry Church Charities - Leaflet

JN362.6 - Plans of Ford's Hospital, from the Building News, August 31st 1877, and Ancient Domestick Architecture, Vol. 1

**Newspaper Articles**

Tiles from Chapel – *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 21/6/52, p.7, c.2-3

Open to Public – CET 28/7/53, p.7, c.1

First Resident – CET 2/1/54, p.1