

A tour of some of Coventry's historic buildings



Michael Pierre de Villiers

A tour of some of Coventry's historic buildings

Michael Pierre de Villiers

Copyright © Michael Pierre de Villiers 2023

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means without the permission of the author.

Any errors that may have occurred are inadvertent. Anyone who, for any reason, detects errors are asked to contact the author, or publisher, so that acknowledgement may be made in any subsequent prints, or editions. Map and all photographs taken by the Author.

Title page: Bayley Lane looking east. St Michael's ruin on the left and St. Mary's Hall behind the Golden Cross Inn on the right.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Pierre de Villiers was born in Durban, South Africa. He was trained to World Meteorological Organization class one meteorologist and multi-discipline weather forecaster in the South African Weather Service where he reached the rank of Director. He served on a weather ship in the South Atlantic. He served on World Meteorological Organization expert teams and was World Meteorological Organization rapporteur for the Africa region. He was also a commercial pilot and flying instructor. More recently he was a weather forecaster in the United Arab Emirates, then in England. Now retired.

M. P. de Villiers
PhD MSc MDip (FRMetS CMet retired)
2023-09-02

A tour of some of Coventry's historic buildings

Michael Pierre de Villiers

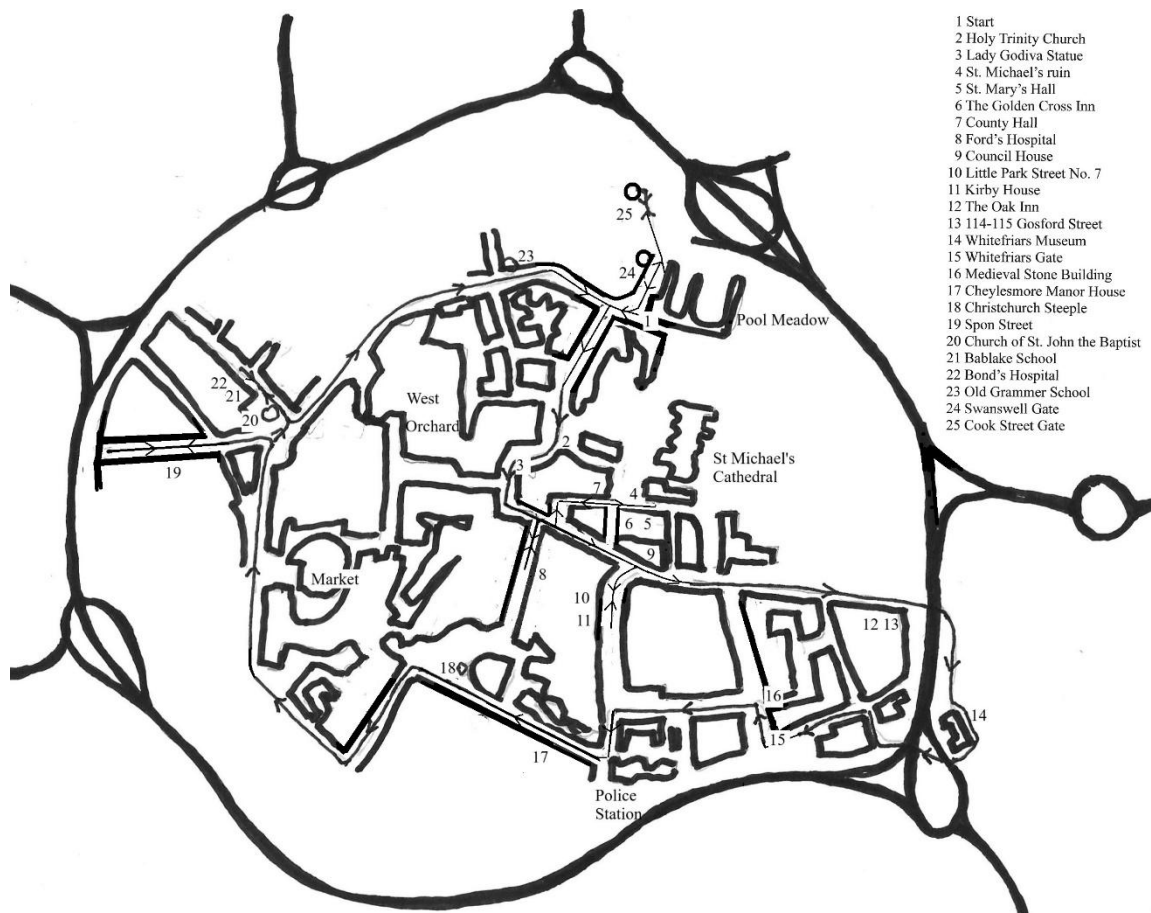
The name Coventry is believed to be derived from a local Saxon landowner named Cofa and a tree that marked the extent of his property. Apparently, a prominent tree was often used as an identifiable meeting point. Hence, Cofa's tree, or Cofa tree, became Coventry (Orland, 2022; Walters, 2019).

A known settlement has existed at Coventry at least since Roman times and likely before, as evidenced by the remains of the Lunt, a Roman fort that dates from about 60-61 AD that was close to the junction of two Roman roads. The fort was abandoned around 80 AD. Coventry was also a medieval boom town. It has, however, been through lean times as well. In the late Saxon period, prior to its mention in the Norman 1086 Domesday book, it is believed to have been a modest size town of about 1200 people. In more recent history, at one time, it was England's third biggest city (Walters, 2019). A book worth reading is Peter Walters "The little history of Coventry".

Through the centuries buildings and most of the historic buildings, have been demolished as part of the town planning process, often without thought of their historical value. Fifty bombing raids by the Luftwaffe that started on the 18th August demolished a large part of Coventry and some historic buildings. The bombing of Coventry on the 14th November 1940 was the most concentrated and notorious. Two other raids on the 8th and 10th of April 1941 were close contenders. At the time Coventry was the most bombed city in the UK (Walters, 2019). However, some buildings have survived and have even been saved from modern day demolition by being relocated. For example, to Spon Street. This is now considered undesirable. It is now preferred to leave a building in its original location.

The Coventry City Council lists 11 sites in the more central part of Coventry while Historic Coventry lists 17. However, British Listed Buildings (2023a), in the greater Coventry area, lists 19 Grade I, 26 Grade II* and 315 Grade II buildings. In the United Kingdom (UK) a listed building is one of special architectural or historic interest. A listed building may not be demolished, extended or altered without special permission from the local planning authority in consultation with the relevant central government agency. The building must be man-made and at least approaching its original state. Keeping this in mind, all buildings built before 1700 are listed and most up to 1840. It becomes much more difficult for more recent buildings to be listed, particularly after 1945, they must be at least 30 years old and be exceptional to be listed. Structures such as bridges, monuments, sculptures, war memorials, milestones and mileposts may also be listed. Ancient structures, such as Stonehenge, are usually classified as Scheduled Ancient Monuments. The listing in descending order of importance is Grade I, Grade II* or Grade II. Grade I buildings are of exceptional interest. Grade II* groups particularly important buildings of more than special interest. While Grade II lists buildings that are of special interest, usually private residential buildings and consist of about 92% of listings. There was a non-statutory Grade III until 1970 (British Listed Buildings, 2023b).

On numerous occasions, the author has taken photographs of a number of these historic buildings. These are presented. Their locations are shown in the sketch below. The author made a more concerted effort to walk around the central part of Coventry taking photographs on the 11th November 2011, Remembrance Day (coincidentally (20)11-11-11). A rather apt day of the year considering some of the buildings visited were World War II damaged and restored.



A rough sketch of the route followed in the text and locations with crude buildings and roads marked bounded by the ring road to provide perspective.



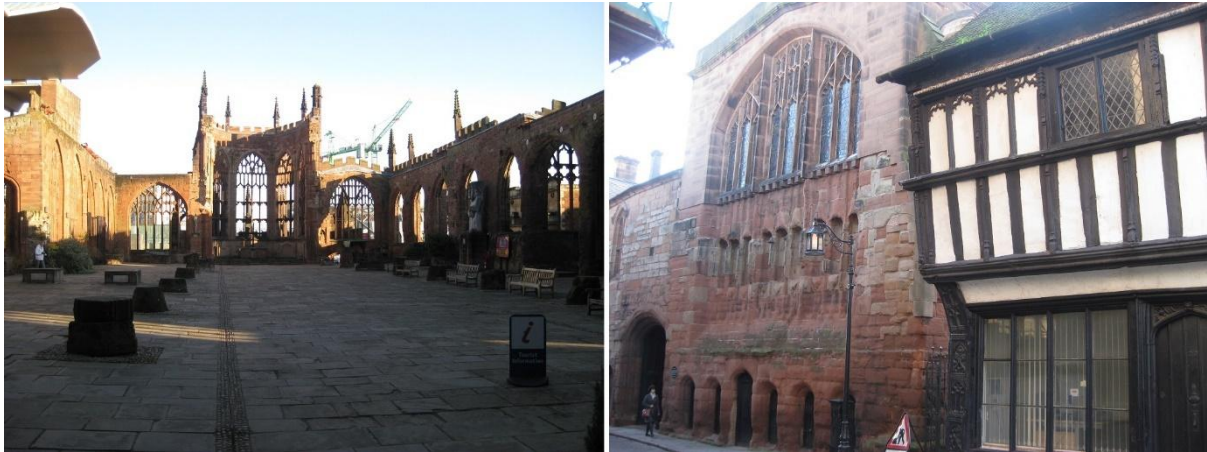
Holy Trinity Church. Behind is the remaining spire of World War II destroyed St. Michaels Cathedral.

Walking uphill along Trinity Street from the Pool Meadow bus terminus, one passes the Grade I listed **Holy Trinity Church**. It escaped destruction or damage during the bombing raid on the 14th December 1940, largely thanks to fire-fighters and the vicar spraying water to prevent damage from falling incendiaries. The Coventry City Council (2023) website says it is “the only complete medieval church in Coventry and one of the largest



Lady Godiva statue.

medieval parish churches in England.” Although, almost cathedral in size “it has changed greatly through its 900-year history: practically destroyed by fire in 1257, it has been rebuilt, extended and redecorated as religious styles and theologies have passed through Coventry”. The large stained glass windows are worth seeing. Going further south, one arrives at Broadgate square and the statue of a naked **Lady Godiva** (Godgiftu in old English, meaning God gift) on a horse. While not an ancient monument, nor credible that she was naked, it is nevertheless Grade II listed. Myth, certainly untrue, has it that she rode naked through the streets of Coventry in response to her husband’s dare that he would ease high taxation of his tenants if she did. Apparently, she owned the land anyway. The myth started about 150 years later (Agutter 1990 and 1992, Walters 2019).



St. Michael’s ruin. The only remaining spire is behind the photographer and St. Mary’s Hall (both sites are Grade I listed) and part of the Grade II* Golden Cross Inn far right.

Turning into Pepper Lane the first stop was the bombed beyond restoration Grade I listed original **St. Michael’s Cathedral**. The 14th-century Gothic church later given the status of cathedral in 1918, is a ruined shell after being bombed during the Second World War. Its 90 metre high west tower and spire built between 1374–1450 survived. A new St Michael's Cathedral was built immediately next to the preserved ruin.

Adjacent in Bayley Lane is Grade I listed **St Mary’s Hall**. A wall plaque proclaims that it was “built 1340-1460. Restored 1824. Thought to include parts of a 12th century castle in the south wall. Originally the guild hall and chambers for the merchant guilds of St Mary and Holy



The Golden Cross Inn.

Trinity founded 1340 and 1364, it became the first seat of local government in the town. Mayor J. Ward elected 1346 started an unbroken series (of mayors) to the present day. The building is scheduled as an ancient monument.” I have not had the opportunity of seeing the inside of the Guildhall. Apparently, inside is beautiful. Upstairs in the Great Hall is an ornate ceiling and stained glass window. On the walls are life-size portraits, tapestries and beautiful decoration. Mary Queen of Scots was imprisoned here for three months from November 1569 by order of Queen Elizabeth I (Walters, 2019;

Historic England 2023). By the way, in Old English, words ending in ley, as in Bayley Lane, indicated a clearing in woodland (Walters, 2019).

At number 22 Bayley Lane, is the Grade II* **The Golden Cross Inn**. It is next to St. Mary's Hall and across the road from ruined St.. Michael's Cathedral. Another wall plaque says "Built circa 1583. Much restored, one of the most dramatic examples of medieval timber framed building to survive in Coventry with oversailing or jettied upper floors on exposed timbers."



County Hall.

Looking diagonally across the road to Cuckoo Lane is the Grade II* **County Hall**. Built 1783-4, yet another plaque says it was "used for the County Court and Quarter sessions. It is the only remaining 18th century public building of architectural distinction in Coventry. At one time it also housed the prison governor of the adjoining jail, which stood in Trinity Lane. The last public execution to take place in Coventry was in the street outside (Cuckoo Lane) in 1849."

Heading west from Bayley Lane into Pepper Lane, then a dogleg right into Greyfriars Lane, one arrives at **Ford's Hospital**, or almshouse. It is Gade I listed. A wall plaque says the building was "named after William Ford who's will of 1509 endowed the almshouses. Built around a narrow court yard it is one of the most perfect examples of timber framed architecture in the country. Badly damaged by an air raid of November 1940 but rebuilt with original timbers 1951-53". Strictly speaking, wherever possible salvaged original material was used."



Ford's Hospital, or Almshouse and interior from the front door.

Returning north along Greyfriars Lane, turn right into High Street to the Grade II listed **Council House** at the intersection of Little Park Street, Earl Street and High Street. It was built in 1913-17, although not officially opened until 1920. While not a particularly old building in relation to others in Coventry, it is interesting. A wall plaque states "The red sandstone facing and early Tudor styling was chosen by competition and had to be in keeping with nearby St. Mary's Hall". Beneath the central gable are three large statues depicting Leofric (left), Godiva (right)



Council House.

of Arms consisting of an elephant with a castle on its back and a cat on top. The elephant symbolises strength sufficient to carry a tower or Coventry castle with armed men, the cat indicates watchfulness (Orland, 2023). On the night of 14th-15th November 1940, bombing shattered all the windows, although generally the building escaped with relatively minor damage.

and above centre, Justice. Above the arched doorway is the Coventry Coat



Statues in the central arch.



Little Park Street No 7.

Little Park Street No 7. A short walk southward along Little Park Street, on the west side is Grade II* listed number 7, an attractive early to mid 18th century hipped roof, three story, red brick house with six ground floor to first floor fluted Corinthian pilasters surmounted by a second floor decorative entablature extending over the pilasters. The second floor has plain pilasters. It has arched sash windows. The central door has a traceried fanlight in a stone surround of Doric pilasters. Above the door, there is a first floor central architrave window surround with foliated volutes (British Listed Buildings, 2023a).



Kirby House.

Two buildings further south, is Little Park Street No 16. Similar to No 6 in that it is red brick, three story with less ornate pilasters, similar age and Grade II* listed **Kirby House**. Circa 1700 is has a hipped old tiled roof behind parapet and stone cornice. The four Composite pilasters extend to the cornice surmounted by a round shallow dish (paterae) shell pattern. The sash windows are flush in broad frames with keyblocked flat arches and window sills. The central

doorway with fanlight has a surround of attached Ionic columns and ornamental segmental pediment above which is a central window with architrave surround with foliated volutes. The forecourt has early 19th century railings. (British Listed Buildings, 2023a).

The Oak Inn and 114–115 Gosford Street. Back in front of Council House in Earl Street it is about a 5 minute walk eastward to the above mentioned places, where the street name changes to Jordan Well then Gosford Street. Just before the overhead bypass, on the south side of the street are two Grade II listed buildings. First is the two storied, tiled roof The Oak Inn. An early timber framed building that, in the 19th century had the walls plastered, or to use the technical term was refaced in stucco. Two buildings further is 114–115 Gosford Street and early timber frame two story building faced with stucco, tiled roof and upper casement windows (British Listed Buildings, 2023a).



The Oak Inn at 120 Gosford Street and 114-115 Gosford Street.

The author was not overly impressed by either building. They are mentioned here simply because they were on the way to the main objective which was the Grade I listed **Whitefriars Museum**. This was reached by walking under the bypass and turning south along a wide and paved walkway. The building was immediately visible in the distance about 2 minute's walk away. Set in parkland it is officially off nearby Gulson Road.



Whitefriars Museum.

An information board at the site states: “The building and foundations that can be seen before you are the surviving part of Coventry’s Carmelite Friary, built in 1342 and commonly known as the Whitefriars. The sandstone building to the left was once part of a much larger complex and contains the one surviving side of the Friary’s cloister on the ground floor while upstairs in the former dormitory where the friars once slept. The foundations to the right are the remains of the Friary’s church which was 96m long and now

lies mostly under the ring road. The Friary closed in 1538 and became a house while the church was briefly used as a school before being demolished in 1572. The surviving building remained a house until 1801 when it was sold to become Coventry's workhouse up until 1948 when it became a Salvation Army Hostel before becoming part of the Herbert Museum in the 1960s." Although named a museum, it is a sealed building with no evidence of it being a museum one could enter.



Whitefriars Gate.

escaped destruction during the Dissolution of the Monasteries, an administrative and legal process, between 1536 and 1541, instituted by which Henry VIII. By the way, a postern is defined as a secondary door or gate in a fortification such as a city wall or castle. Often in a concealed location so that people could come and go unnoticed. Often small. Handy for defenders to make surprise attacks on attackers when besieged.

Most of the original form of the building is uncertain due to later alterations. The building has undergone building material changes during its existence from dressed stone and timber framing to being more recently heavily restored during the 1960's to maintain the stability of the structure internally and externally, as can be seen by the pitch perfect roof in the photograph and buttressed brick side wall. As recently as the 21st century the building was a toy museum. A long and detailed account of the gate's architecture and history is available at British Listed Buildings, and Historic England.

Walking a short distance northward along Much Park Street at the intersection with Saint Johns



Medieval stone building.

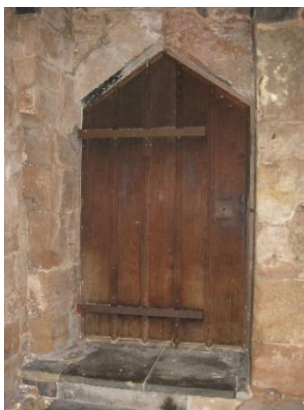
Passing along a walkway through two subways under the bypass to the south-west of the Whitefriars building one arrives at White Friars Lane. Heading west there is a path from the south side of the road before the road ends. Following the path west one arrives at the southern end of Much Park Street and Grade II* listed **Whitefriars Gate** at 36-37 Much Park Street. A wall plaque states briefly that a "14th century postern gatehouse to the former Whitefriars Carmelite priory dissolved in 1538. The remains of the priory, now a museum can be found in Gulson Road." The gatehouse

Street is the Grade II* listed remains of a rectangular **medieval stone building** of which three walls and a pointed arch window survive. In a few places red brick has been cemented to maintain the stability of the structure. A wall plaque states: "Possibly late 13th century sandstone building revealed during wartime bombing. Some 13th to 14th century pottery was found when the site was excavated in 1971. but archaeologists have not been able to discover its origins or purpose. It may have been linked in some way with nearby Whiteriver's Priory."

Cheylesmore Manor House, Grade II* listed. Walk westward along Saint Johns (sic) Street then south along Little Park Street to a small traffic circle in front of the entrance to the Coventry central police station, turn right along New Union Street continuing until where Greyfriars Lane meets New Union Street. At this point turn left through an alleyway and one arrives at Cheylesmore Manor House. This building is now part of Coventry's Register Office.



Cheylesmore Manor House.



The ogee-headed door.

There is a large mounted board with a plan of the manor next to an ogee-headed door and states; “A manor house at Cheylesmore is first mentioned in the year 1250. In 1320 it passed to Queen Isabella, wife of Edward II and from her to her grandson, the Black Prince. In 1385 the royal manor was enclosed within the city walls, then under construction. In the 16th century Leland wrote “the King has a palace at Coventry now somewhat in ruin”. The great hall was said to be down. In 1661 the other buildings were repaired by Sir Robert Townsend. In 1738 a weaver asked permission to make a tenement of one of them. In 1955, most of the south wing, which had become a range of industrial top-shops, was demolished. In 1965 Coventry Corporation undertook restoration of the gatehouse and the surviving bays of the north and south wings. The work, completed in 1968, revealed important historical features. For example, the south wing probably belongs to the original manor house of the 13th century; the ogee-headed doorway (on right) is an original entrance to the manor grounds from the Greyfriars Monastery of which only the church steeple still stands at the corner of Union Street and Warwick Lane; the open timber roofs had scarcely been altered since they were built; and of the original framework enough had survived to assure authentic restoration”. A long and detailed account of the gate’s architecture and history is available at British Listed Buildings and Historic England.

Christchurch Steeple, Grade II* listed. Returning through the alleyway to New Union Street, turn right and proceed westward to the right-angle intersection with Warwick Road from the south. On your right in the Christchurch Steeple. It is so tall one can see the top of the steeple from far away.

A wall plaque states “This tower and spire formed the centre of the church of the Grey Friars built in 1359 with stone from a quarry nearby owned by the Black Prince. The Friary was demolished in 1542 but the spire was left standing in a garden until 1829 when Christchurch was built around it. The church was destroyed during the bombing of the city in the April of



Christchurch Steeple.

1941 but the tower and spire once again survived. The site was purchased by Coventry Corporation who restored the tower and spire” (The date was 8th April 1941 – author). It is the only remains of the Franciscan friary (also known as Greyfriars) founded 1234.

At this point it is worthwhile clarifying the various monasteries in Coventry starting in the medieval age in the 11th century and names such as Greyfriars and Whitefriars.

There was the Christian diocese of the church of Rome with its episcopal centre at Lichfield, at one stage it moved to Chester from 1075 to 1102. At another time the diocese of Litchfield and Coventry. The other Christian order was the powerful monastic Coventry Benedictine Abbey. There was not peaceful co-existence between the two (Walters, 2019).

The primary occupation of the Benedictine monks was study and contemplation. A strong self-preservation instinct meant that administration and business ability were important. Self-preservation also meant they could be “experts at being economical with the truth” (Walters, 2019). They also managed large flocks of sheep and were major producers of wool (Walters, 2019).

In 1150, the Cistercian order, an austere offshoot of the Benedictines, who favoured manual labour and self-sufficiency with excellent money-making skills, established themselves 8 kilometres east of Coventry at Coombe Abbey and 5 years later also at Stoneleigh 6 kilometres to the south of Coventry. They were permitted to own property and soon had major properties in Coventry. Plus, they were expert sheep farmers, wool at the time being the driving force of the English economy. By the early 1220s they had built an abbey church at Coombe from stone (Walters, 2019). Coombe Abbey is now the Coombe Abbey Hotel.

The 6th Earl of Chester, a succession of Earls named Ranulf, a year before his death in 1231, invited the Franciscan order, also known as Greyfriars because they wore grey habits, to establish a friary next to his new Cheylesmore Manor. This was in situ in 1234 located at what was much later to become Christchurch. They were a mendicant (or begging) order of street preachers who preferred to rely on the generosity of the public other than the money-making methods favoured by other orders. Their humility and simple lifestyle irked the Benedictines, especially their more simple and less costly services such as burials, which became popular with the rich and powerful for 300 years. The Greyfriars Coventry friary was modest and wooden built with wooden tiles (Walters, 2019).

In 1342 there was a newcomer in town. The wealthy Sir John Pouteney gave the Carmelite order of friars, known as Whitefriars because of the colour of their habits, 10 acres of land and a dwelling house close to what was to become the London Road into Coventry. The Benedictine

priory also gave them a grant of land probably to encourage a rival order of mendicants to their hated Greyfriars. The Whitefriars built an impressive, almost cathedral size church, complete with the unusual feature of resonance passages cut in the floor to improve acoustics for singing (Walters, 2019).

The final addition to the monastic group was the Carthusian order in 1381 granted nominally by Richard II. They established a Charterhouse of St Anne at Shortley, about 1.5 kilometres south-east of central Coventry, next to the now London Road (and opposite the London Road Cemetery) in 1385. King Richard II laid the foundation stone. Stone was quarried from the Cheylesmore estate with the king's approval. Charterhouse is their name for their monastery or priory. Contemplation was their focus via solitude and silence and spiritually humble. The head of each charterhouse was a prior with two types of monks and division of labour, namely choir monks and lay brothers (Walters, 2019; Jack and Hewitt, 2013; Wikipedia, 2023b).

All suffered the same fate during the Dissolution of the Monasteries, an administrative and legal process, instituted by Henry VIII between 1536 and 1541, when land was confiscated, monasteries stripped of worthwhile contents and buildings destroyed (or slighted. Archaic term).

Some distance away to the north-west past the Coventry Market, after first walking along Warwick Road then north along Corporation Street is Fleet Street, which becomes **Spon Street**. Here there are still a high number of Tudor period buildings. As mentioned at the beginning of the article, a significant number have been rebuilt here from elsewhere to avoid demolition.

There are 15 Grade II buildings in Spon Street. Some of the more interesting, historically significant and picturesque are depicted. The Spon Street Townscape Scheme of the 1960s and 1970s involved dismantling and relocation of historically significant medieval buildings from elsewhere in the city to sites along Spon Street, a street that already had old buildings (Gammie, 2021). One was reconstructed as late as 1981-82 and the last one in 1988-1990. Two were rescued from the demise of Spon Street west of the new ring road. Information pertaining to the different buildings was obtained from wooden plaques with white painted lettering, all but one of which have deteriorated considerably with age, in places impossible to decipher.



9 Spon Street.

9 Spon Street. This Grade II listed building, “dating from the 15th century, was formerly 7 Much Park Street. It was dismantled and reconstructed in its original form in 1970-71. The front range, built over a stone vaulted cellar, had a ground floor workshop and upper floor solar, the original stair position is still evident in the trimmed joists. A passage led to the hall and other buildings at the rear. One hall bay was open to the roof and the vestiges of a smoke outlet may still be seen. The original hearth has been preserved in its correct position and level beneath the present floor. The project was carried out by the City Corporation with the aid of gifts of material.” A characteristic of the houses along the street, seen in the photographs, is a jettied or oversailing upper floor. Another feature is a string of decorative



14-15 and 16 Spon Street.

and the transition to brick. Dismantling commenced in February 1970 and re-erection was completed in March 1975 by the Coventry City Council with the aid of gifts.” Next to it, at **14-15 Spon Street**, is another Grade II listed building. An attractive circa 15th or 16th century timber frame building with plater filling and jetted or oversailing upper floor. It has been considerably restored. The upper floor has casement windows set in twin gables while the ground floor has modern windows.



21 Spon Street.

to a courtyard and rear wing demolished about 1900. The heavy frame of the west gable belonged to its earlier and grander neighbour destroyed during the war. The building was dismantled in 1972 and reconstructed in 1981-82 as part of the City Corporation’s Spon Street Townscape Scheme. Spon Street Townscape Scheme.”

22 Spon Street, Grade II listed **Old Windmill**. Billed as “Coventry’s oldest and best-known



22 Spon Street.

lights along the frontage, mostly along the eve of the roof. Apparently, a permanent fixture that are lit at night during festive occasions.

16 Spon Street. Grade II listed. “This building, previously 142-3 on the north side of Spon Street beyond the ringway, was built about 1700. It had a rear range of two gables of which one has been rebuilt. The original staircase had gone, as also had most of the front wall-frame. The building illustrates the end of the timber-frame tradition in Coventry

21 Spon Street. For an unknown reason, this building is not Grade listed. “This building was formally the Green Dragon Inn at 122 – 123 Much Park Street. The present front range of C.1500 was built on the site of an earlier three bay hall house. The rear block is circa 1450 and consisted of the hall of the inn and two upper floors for guests chambers. The front block was built soon afterwards. A wide through-passage linked both buildings

pub dating back to 1451” according to the perfect condition plaque. It goes on to say “Until the mid 19th century it was split into two premises, with the partition being the passageway from the front door which ran between the two. To the left of the passageway were a shop where an assortment of goods, including toys was sold. To the right was the pub. When the property converted in to one, the left hand side formed part of the domestic quarters until the pub was extended across the entire ground floor in the early 1980’s. The pub had its own

brewery until 1930 and the brewhouse still survives to the rear of the pub. During the renovation of 1985 a Victorian fireplace was removed to expose an open stone heater in the lounge, which dates back to the 15th century, complete with priest hole. The interior retains all of its existing rooms, offering cosy and intimate settings as well as open fires and exposed beams”.



160-162 Spon Street.



163-164 Spon Street.



169 Spon Street.

160-162 Spon Street situated at the western end of the street. Grade II listed, there is very little information, there being no wooden plaque. It is another attractive circa 15th or 16th century timber frame with plaster infill, an oversailing upper floor and old tiled roof.

163-164 Spon Street. Grade II listed. A very faded plaque, difficult to read, says “This is one of the very few surviving three story jetted buildings of Coventry. It dates from 1500 and was formerly at 8-10 Much Park Street next to the present 9 Spon Street. Its semi-detached plan is also notable. As a medieval city centre building, it is larger and richer than the indigenous Spon Street buildings”. The rest of the wooden plaque, that has aged considerably to the point that is very difficult to decipher, alludes to the plan of the building and similarity to the building now at 9 Spon Street. It can be deciphered that the building was dismantled and reassembled between 1973(?) and 1974 by the City Corporation.

169 Spon Street. Grade II listed. The plaque is very weatherworn and very difficult to decipher. What can be discerned is that “This building dating from the 14th century as shown by the early style of its roof construction and the curved braces in its front wall is one of the oldest houses in Coventry. The front block was originally two separate workshops each with an open hall at the back.

The street door opened into a through passage and there was a ladder stair to the upper chamber. Its restoration was the first of the City’s Spon Street Town scheme carried out by with the aid of gifts of material between 1969 and 1970 by the Coventry Corporation.”

Back at the Fleet Street intersection with Corporation Street, situated between Fleet Street and Hill Street to the north, is the attractive red sandstone Grade I listed **Church of St. John the Baptist**. It was founded in 1343 and restored in 1608 and 1875–77. According to Historic England (2023) it is “largely perpendicular in appearance with a crossing tower, transepts,



Church of St John the Baptist.



Bablake School.

clerestories to nave and chancel and aisles. Changes of plan are visible in several places together with alterations to the fabric” and that the use of different quality red sandstone construction means continual maintenance is required and the transept roof covering will require replacement in the future.

Walking a short distance along Hill Street one arrives at the Grade I listed **Bablake School** building with tiled roof and two hipped casement dormers (Historic England, 2023). Built in the 14th century it has a ground floor ashlar wall facing the road and an oversailing timber-framed first floor. A wall plaque says it was originally priest’s quarters for nearby St John the Baptist church and part of the collegiate of St John. “In 1560 it was remodelled as a boys’ hospital and later boys school.” After the school removed to Coundon Road, 1890, the building used as offices for General Municipal Charities and governors of Bablake School.

which was “endowed by the will of Thomas Bond in 1506. Much restored in 1832-34 it still provides a home for the elderly” according to the wall plaque.”

Adjoining it and part of the collegiate, is the Grade II listed **Bond’s or Bablake Hospital**,



Bond’s or Bablake Hospital entrance and inner courtyard.

Continuing eastward along Corporation Street to the intersection with Bishop Street where Corporation Street becomes Hales Street, is the Grade I listed **Old Grammer School** (St. John’s Hospital). It is of architectural interest and a rare example of a medieval hospital building. A wall plaque says it was formally a “chapel circa 1340 of the Hospital of St. John the Baptist founded in the 12th century. After dissolution of the monasteries, it was converted circa 1550 into a free grammar school (King Henry VIII School). The school moved to its present site in Warwick Road in 1885. Sir William Dugdale, historian, was a pupil here in 1615 – 1630. The building is now a scheduled ancient monument” and Grade I listed.



Old Grammar School (St. John's Hospital).



Swanswell Gate with blocked archway.

The **Cook Street Gate** is a short walk to the north of the park next to the Swanswell Gate. A wall plaque says Cook Street Gate was “completed circa 1385 as part of the medieval town wall, which was demolished in 1662 by order of Charles II. Only two town gates have survived from the original twelve. This is the only functional gate. Presented to the city by Col. W. F. Wyley in 1913 and restored in 1918. The building is now a scheduled ancient monument” and Grade I listed.

A notice board near to Swanswell Gate says that “Lady Herbert's Garden frames one of the last surviving sections of Coventry's medieval city wall. In 1329 Edward III gave his permission to collect taxes to build a defensive wall around Coventry”. Construction began in 1356, completed in 1400. However, amendments to the position of the wall were made until 1534. The wall was just over 3 kilometres long, 3.6 metres high and 2.7 metres thick. It had outer and inner sandstone walls filled with rubble. The wall had 20 watch towers and 12 gatehouses. Cook Street Gate was completed in 1385. Swanswell Gate was completed around 1440 and was originally known at Priory Gate because it was the entrance to the prior's land.

A short distance east along Hales Street and making a complete circuit back to our start, but now turning north-west past the Transport Museum one arrives at Grade I listed **Swanswell Gate** next to the Pool Meadow bus terminus and at the southern end of a park named Lady Herbert's Gardens. Another wall plaque (they are very useful to have) says “completed circa 1440 as part of the fortified town wall, remains of which stand in the adjoining gardens. Originally named Priory Gate, it gave access to the prior's lands outside the wall, including Swanswell Fishpool. The archways were blocked, windows inserted and the roof raised when it was converted into a house. Repaired and restored in 1932, the gate house and gardens were presented to the city by Sir Alfred Herbert. The gate and remaining wall are now scheduled ancient monuments.” There were originally 12 gates in the wall around the city. Only two remain intact. This one and the Cook Street Gate.



Cook Street Gate.

Cook Street Gate was completed in 1385. Swanswell Gate was completed around 1440 and was originally known at Priory Gate because it was the entrance to the prior's land.

References

- Agutter, D. M. K. 1990. Meriden: Its People and Houses. Part 1. Alspath Publications.
- Agutter, D. M. K. 1992. Meriden: Its People and Houses. Part 2. Alspath Publications.
- British Listed Buildings. 2023a. Listed Buildings in Coventry. <https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/england/coventry>. Accessed 2023-08-26.
- British Listed Buildings. 2023b. What are Listed Buildings. <https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/site/about-listed-buildings/#.Z1bI8-2ZPwU>. Accessed 2023-05-10.
- Coventry City Council, 2023. Holy Trinity Church - Historic buildings. <https://www.coventry.gov.uk/directory-record/49569/holy-trinity-church>. Accessed 2023-08-26.
- Gammie, E. 2021. Spon Street Townscape Scheme. Geograph Britain and Ireland. <https://www.geograph.org.uk/snippet/8895>. Accessed 2023-08-26.
- Historic England. 2023. <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/map-search/>. Accessed 2023-08-26
- Jack, P and Hewitt, J. 2013. Coventry Charterhouse. Family Researcher. <https://www.familyresearcher.co.uk/Disappearing-Coventry/Charterhouse-Coventry.html#:~:text=The%20Carthusian%20Order%20was%20founded%20in%201084%20C%20and, and%20supporting%20manual%20labourers%20known%20as%20lay%20brethren> Accessed. 2023-09-02.
- Orland, Rob. 2023. Historic Coventry. <https://www.historiccoventry.co.uk/>. Accessed 2023-06-19.
- Walters, Peter. 2019. The little history of Coventry. The History Press, Cheltenham.
- Wikipedia. 2023a. Council House, Coventry. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_House,_Coventry. Accessed 2023-08-26.
- Wikipedia. 2023b. The Charterhouse, Coventry. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Charterhouse,_Coventry. Accessed 2023-09-01