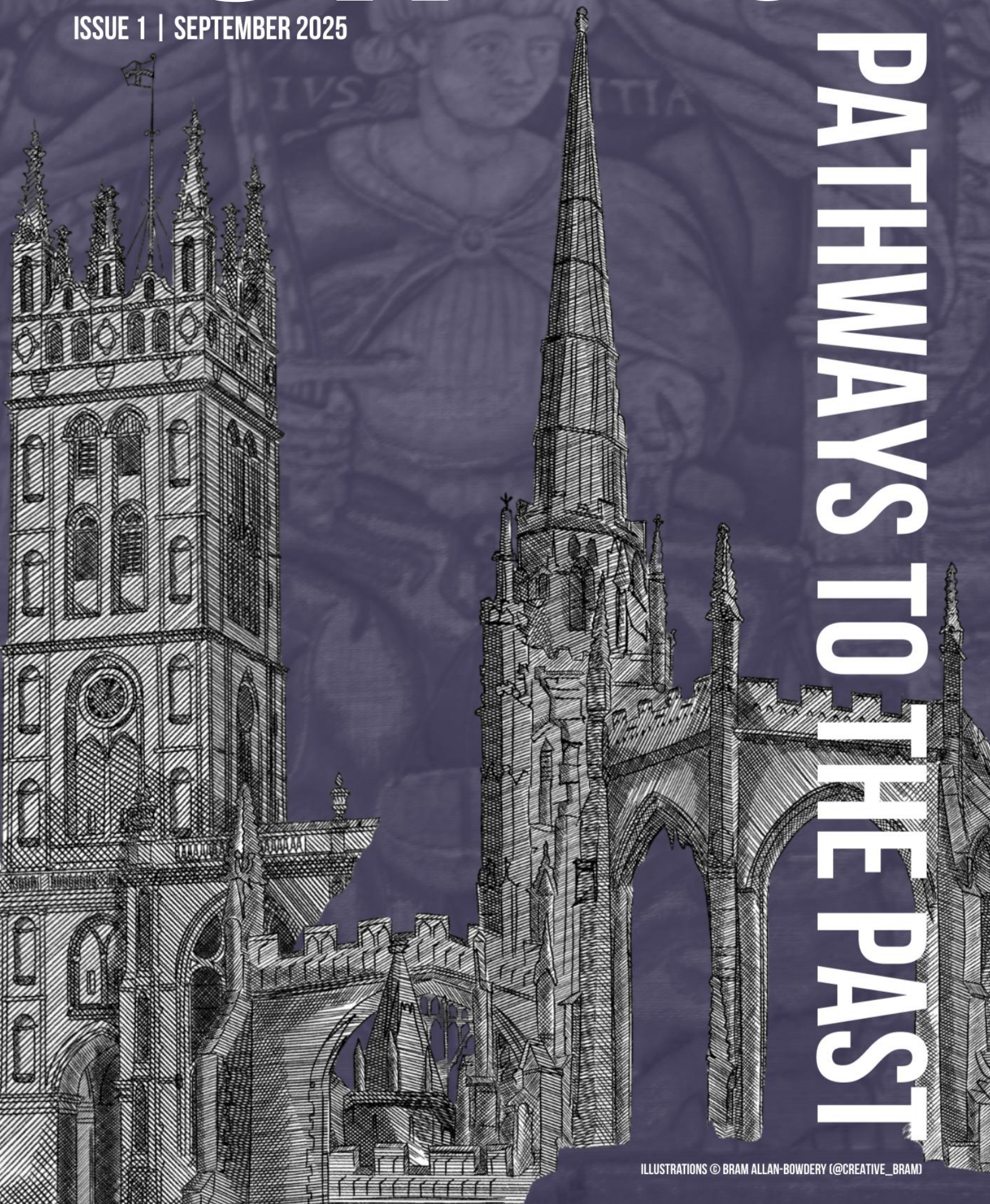


rewind.

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PATHWAYS TO THE PAST



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Editor's Letter

By Jakob Reid, third-year History and Politics student and Founder of Rewind

Dear Reader,

It is with great excitement – and no small amount of pride – that I welcome you to the inaugural issue of *Rewind Magazine*, the print publication of our student-led history initiative, *Rewind*.

This magazine – and *Rewind* more broadly – was born from a simple but urgent conviction: history should be far more than a subject locked away in lectures or buried beneath the dry footnotes of academic texts. It should be vivid, challenging, and alive with meaning. History's true power lies not in pleasing specialists or ticking scholarly boxes, but in sparking genuine connection – with the world around us and with people beyond academia. Without that connection, history risks fading into irrelevance – admired by a select few who have the means to access it and understood by even fewer.

With that vision in mind, *Rewind* was created as a platform by and for students – a space where we could tell stories from the past in ways that speak to the present and inspire both passion and creativity. What you hold in your hands (or scroll through online) is the result of over a year of dedication, collaboration, and imagination. From thought-provoking articles to powerful interviews and original films, every *Rewind* piece reflects a deep commitment to storytelling and a fresh perspective on the past. This first issue, then, is more than just a launch – it's a collective statement: that history matters, and that how we tell it matters even more.

And where better to anchor our first edition than with the history closest to us? Over the past eight months, we've worked tirelessly on our *Pathways to the Past* project. Created entirely by Warwick students, it brings local history to life through a diverse blend of media – including articles, interviews, archival research, and documentary storytelling. Its mission is simple but ambitious: to make Warwickshire's history accessible and relevant, while strengthening the connection between students and the wider community.

So, why *Rewind*? Because to *rewind* is not to retreat – it's to pause, to revisit, to pay attention. In a world that moves at full speed, *Rewind* invites us to slow down and look again at what we thought we knew. It's not about nostalgia – it's about uncovering hidden connections, asking new questions, and finding relevance in the stories that came before us.

And none of this would exist without the people behind it.

The *Rewind* team is a vibrant, interdisciplinary group of Warwick students who have poured time, thought, and care into every part of this publication and initiative. From editors and writers to filmmakers, designers, and researchers, every contributor has helped shape *Rewind* into something bold, collaborative, and deeply student-led. We come from different departments, backgrounds, and experiences – but we share a belief that history is worth rethinking, and that storytelling is one of the most powerful ways to do it.

I'm incredibly proud of what this first issue represents – not just in its content, but in what *Rewind* stands for. As a self-funded, student-led initiative, we rely on the passion and support of students to keep going. Every penny that goes into *Rewind* is invested not in empty gestures, but in creating real opportunities for people to engage with history in diverse and meaningful ways. History isn't simply something to learn about – it's something to take part in.

Special thanks go to Gabrielle Skinner-Ducharme and Olivia Turnbull for their work in bringing this issue to print. Gabrielle's design leadership and commitment throughout this process were instrumental in shaping both the look and feel of this magazine.

Thank you for opening this issue. Thank you for reading, watching, and joining us at the beginning of what we hope will be a long and evolving journey. Whether you study history or simply carry a curiosity or passion for the past, I hope *Rewind* becomes a place where you feel inspired to explore, question, and share your own stories.

Warmly,
Jakob

What Is Public History, and Why Does It Matter?

By Harry McNeile, third-year History student

At the core of the *Pathways to the Past* project is a simple message: our past is something we should both enjoy and feel authority over. History isn't just for obscure journals or the semi-popularised books of institutional historians. As Hilda Kean and Paula Ashton note, everyone is an 'active agent in creating history' – making it difficult to distinguish the historian from 'their publics.' We are all products of the thoughts, words, and actions of our predecessors; therefore, we all have a right to engage with and discuss the events that have shaped the world we live in.

In this article, I aim to explain why practising history outside institutional academia matters. But first, I'll touch on the somewhat ambiguous nature of public history. One of the most persistent challenges for historians has been defining what exactly 'public' history means. As Thomas Cauvin suggests, it may be more useful to understand public history not by what it is, but by what its practitioners do.

Two Sides of the Same Coin

A comparison with academic history may help clarify the practice of public history. Academic and public history are designed for different audiences. Academic historians typically write for fellow experts and can assume a certain level of prior knowledge. This allows for more complex discussion and deeper historiographical engagement.

By contrast, public historians must meet their audiences where they are. They cannot assume the same background knowledge and must work to spark curiosity, encourage questions, and promote exploration – achievements of equal value. Methodologically, however, both forms of history converge. While a public historian may not delve into intricate historiographical debates, they still rely on credible sources, represent them accurately, and interpret them with care. Regardless of the intended audience, historians must uphold rigorous academic standards.

An Ongoing Conversation

Public history provides a platform through which historical knowledge can be made accessible to non-specialist audiences. It is a dialogue between academia and wider society,



From left to right: Jakob Reid, Fin Elliott, Noah Hoysted and Gabrielle Skinner-Ducharme at Warwick Castle. © Jakob Reid. All Rights Reserved.

playing a crucial role in shaping collective memory.

Consider, for example, a group of friends entering a museum. They come from diverse backgrounds, with different lived experiences, yet they explore the same exhibition. A banner at the entrance displays a thematic title – perhaps a single word capturing an emotion or action – followed by a subtitle outlining the time and place in focus. A second banner, partially obscuring the artefacts, presents a series of questions to consider while viewing the exhibition.

One friend might move quickly from display to display, drawn to what catches their eye, while another examines each piece slowly and deliberately. As they engage with the artefacts – carefully selected to communicate the exhibition's overarching message – the friends inevitably connect the material to their own lives. Each visitor has a unique experience, shaped by personal associations and reflections. At the end, a screen or QR code invites feedback. Some decline; others respond, providing curators and historians with insight into how the exhibition influenced their thinking and emotions.

In doing so, they've not just consumed history – they've contributed to it. They have taken part in the ongoing discourse between academic historians and the public, helping shape the evolving story of how we understand ourselves.

Adapting to a Changing World

As the world changes, so does public history. With the rise of digital technology and evolving academic practices, public history has become more diverse and democratic. From podcasts and documentaries to online discussions and social media debates, more people than ever are participating in historical discourse. This evolution has helped public history move towards a more reflective and inclusive narrative.



From left to right: Gabrielle Skinner-Ducharme, Jakob Reid, Harry McNeile, and Finn Menich at Kenilworth Castle. © Finn Menich. All rights reserved.

This pluralistic approach has made space for previously marginalised voices and stories. Yet with new platforms come new risks – including the spread of misinformation and politicised distortions of the past. In an age marked by ‘post-truth’ politics, the role of the public historian has never been more critical. They must help audiences develop the tools to think critically, engage with history responsibly, and resist simplistic or misleading narratives. This does not mean people should disengage from history – quite the opposite. Public history empowers us all

to ask questions, seek understanding, and stay curious. It is an invitation to take part in shaping our shared story.

Our Inescapable Responsibility

One of the most rewarding aspects of this project has been witnessing the enthusiasm and commitment of individuals both within and outside the university. From a philosophy student who admitted a prior disinterest in history – now overturned by their involvement in this project – to records offices and local history societies eager to contribute, the support we’ve received has been astounding. It speaks volumes about the power of history to connect people.

This experience has only strengthened my conviction that public history matters. We are all individual stitches in the vast tapestry of humanity’s story. Whether we like it or not, historicity is embedded in our daily lives. Our past, present, and future are interlinked, making history a foundational element of human experience.

History should never be reserved for historians alone. As Raphael Samuel – a key figure in the development of British public history – reminded us, history is a form of social knowledge, a product of ‘a thousand different hands.’ It is therefore our shared responsibility, as inheritors of the past, to engage with history, explore its meanings, and consider how it shapes our future.



From left to right: Finn Menich, Harry McNeile, Jakob Reid, Kleidi Likola, George Marshall, and Helena Smith at the Lord Leycester Hospital. © Finn Menich. All rights reserved.

Putting the ‘Spa’ in Leamington: A Brief Town History

By Scarlett Finlay, second-year History Student

Beloved by many Warwick students, Royal Leamington Spa is a beautiful town in Warwickshire, characterised by grandiose Regency buildings, particularly those on the half-mile-long Parade, as well as the Royal Pump Rooms. Yet, until the 19th century, ‘Leamington Priors’ was little more than a small village south of the River Leam. This article traces the story of how this changed, and how the ‘Spa’ in Leamington Spa came to be.

Leamington’s mineral springs had been known since the Middle Ages. The first recording of these was in 1480, and a century later in 1586, Robert Camden identified the water of one of these springs to be beneficial to health. However, the springs remained largely local knowledge until 1784, when one was rediscovered on Bath Lane (now Bath Street).

The land belonged to William Abbotts, who, along with his friend Benjamin Satchwell, saw an opportunity to exploit the healing properties of the spring. Together, they opened the first commercial baths in the town’s history, Abbotts’ Baths, in 1786. While the first public bath house had opened in 1803, known as Aylesford’s Well, the owner had refused to sell the water. However, after the opening of Abbotts’ Baths, a series of commercial bath houses were opened, turning Leamington from a small village into a fashionable spa resort.

As a result of the success of these establishments, planning began for expansion of the town north of the river, which was to become the place to be. At the centre of this ‘new’ Leamington was the Pump Rooms and Assembly Rooms, which opened in 1814. Houses followed, and the town’s population tripled between 1828 and 1851, reaching 15,724. It was around this time that Leamington Priors began to be known as Leamington Spa, and the town was driven by its now renowned mineral springs, with tourists coming from all over the UK, and even from Europe.



Leamington Spa train station sign © Richard Szejewski, CC BY-SA 2.0

The Royal Pump Room and Baths, as it was known upon its opening, was something which had never been attempted before, and was truly ambitious in its nature. The cost to design and open this new establishment was around £30,000, which would be in excess of £2 million today. It was believed to cure or relieve a range of disorders, from stiffness and rigidity in the joints and tendons, to the effects of gout and paralytic conditions. It became a destination for the affluent classes, and offered a sense of luxury, with gardens for pleasant promenades after treatment, and even a bandstand, where military bands would perform in the summer months. Yet, it was not until 1875 that the gardens would be available for the public to enjoy.

However, by 1848, the fashion of attending such spas began to decrease, and the Pump Rooms suffered losses. They were sold to a local businessman, who eventually in 1860 announced his intention to close the Rooms and put them up for sale. Fortunately, the new owner decided to refurbish the Rooms and keep their important historical legacy alive.

And so, as a spa town, Leamington had a rather short lived, albeit very successful run, and the legacy of this success is still to be seen in the modern town. The Regency architecture of the ‘new’ town north of the river has been maintained and remains uniform. Benjamin Satchwell and William Abbotts are both commemorated with various street names around the town, with Satchwell’s name notably adorning the local Wetherspoon’s. The town continues to be known as Leamington Spa, and the Pump Rooms today stand as a museum and public space, open to all. In fact, you can even sample the saline water from a drinking fountain outside them.

Benjamin Satchwell: Community Champion or Opportunistic Capitalist?

By Josh Mansley, third-year History student

The Benjamin Satchwell is a sacred place known to many a student at the University of Warwick. Whether you're after a post-circle round of shots before POP! on a Wednesday or a quiet pint on a Sunday night, this is the place to go. On a personal note, it's an institution that holds a long and storied history in my own time at Warwick. Or, if you want the simplest explanation: it's just the local Wetherspoons.

However, this article isn't about The Benjamin Satchwell, but about Benjamin Satchwell himself. After all, Royal Leamington Spa's most popular pub must be named after someone real – right?

That man was Georgian-era Leamington local Benjamin Satchwell. Born in 1732, he lived in a small cottage to the south of the River Leam, just behind where the parish church stands today. He was both a shoemaker and Leamington's first postmaster. Most sources describe him as a well-respected man about town – but none of this alone marks him out as one of the 'founding fathers' of Leamington Spa.

The moment that changed Satchwell's life came in the early 1780s. Alongside his now lesser-known friend William Abbotts, he discovered Leamington's second naturally occurring spring. The pair marketed the spa experience at a time when springs were especially fashionable among the wealthy and well-connected. Satchwell undoubtedly made himself a wealthy man – and secured his place in history.

What's particularly interesting is that Leamington already had a natural spring, controlled by the 4th Earl of Aylesford. But Aylesford, over-protective of his monopoly, failed to capitalise on it. Satchwell, meanwhile, was the entrepreneur who provided affluent visitors with what they wanted: health, luxury, and leisure.

Taken together, this paints a very specific picture of Satchwell: a man who amassed



Benjamin Satchwell © The National Gallery, London

wealth by exploiting a local natural resource. On this reading, he was no local hero – certainly not someone who 'deserved' to have a mighty Wetherspoons named after him.

But it's what Satchwell did after he made his fortune that makes him a true community champion. Even before his success, he helped to found The Foundation of Hospitality, Leamington's first Benefit Club. Afterwards, he supported more benefit societies and local charities.

Satchwell's status as a local hero didn't come from economic power alone, but from his care and commitment to his fellow townspeople. He wasn't just a founding father of Leamington's economy – but of its society and culture, too.

Many of today's millionaires and billionaires give to charity in name only – investing token amounts in causes they don't truly understand. Satchwell was different. He remained actively involved in the organisations he helped establish until the day he died. In fact, it's widely believed that 'Satchwell died poor.' After securing his fortune, he dedicated the rest of his life to serving the local community.

So, the next time you find yourself sipping an ice-cold Corona – or knocking back a round of tequila shots – in The Benjamin Satchwell, remember the man behind the name. He wasn't just a savvy businessman. He was a builder of community.

The Cult of Crowley: Did a Leamington Local Influence Scientology?

By Noah Hoysted, third-year History student

In 1947, a cult leader named Aleister Crowley died alone in a Sussex boarding house, surrounded by occult objects and a large supply of heroin. Once a prominent figure in esoteric religious circles, Crowley's unruly behaviour eventually led to him being ostracised from the very cults he helped to create. Of the numerous groups Crowley influenced, Scientology would prove to be the most enduringly infamous. In its early days, the religion's founder, L. Ron Hubbard, maintained an active correspondence with Crowley and viewed him as a spiritual guide. So, how did Crowley fall from being a key influence on the 21st century's most successful cult to an impoverished heroin addict? To understand this question, we must look to Crowley's birthplace: Royal Leamington Spa.

Edward Alexander Crowley was born in Leamington Spa on 12 October 1875. His parents were wealthy Christian fundamentalists, their fortune owing to a successful family brewing business. But behind the veneer of a prosperous Victorian household was a home fraught with tension. From an early

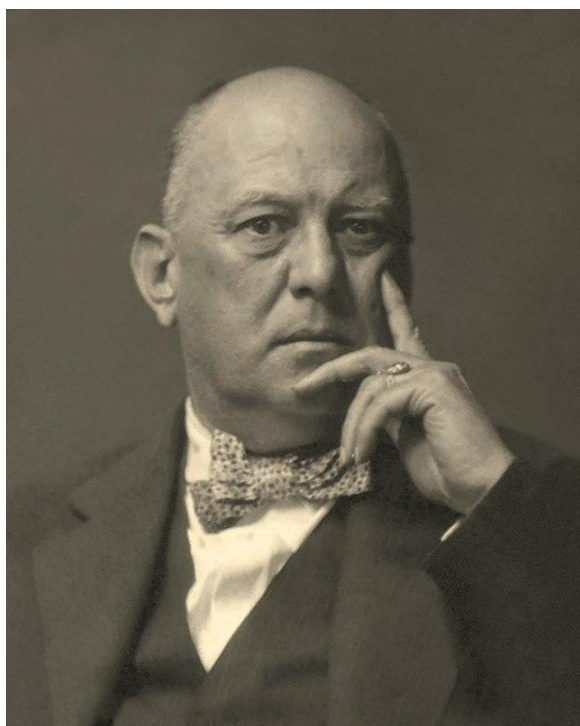
age, Crowley feuded with his mother, who nicknamed him 'the beast'. Rather than shy away from the insult, Crowley embraced it, eventually adopting the title 'The Great Beast' and insisting that friends address him accordingly. This disdain for authority followed him through his education: he was expelled from several Christian boarding schools, where he often argued with tutors and spent his spare time hiring prostitutes and engaging in same-sex relationships. His increasingly libertine behaviour caused a permanent breakdown in his relationship with his mother. In an effort to sever lingering familial ties, he changed his name to Aleister.

Despite his rebelliousness, Crowley was sociable and academically gifted. He gained a place at Cambridge University, where he explored various interests – from mountaineering to chess – and even considered a diplomatic career in Russia at the suggestion of a tutor. But one interest eclipsed all others: the occult.

At Cambridge, Crowley encountered esotericism for the first time. Occultism had gained popularity in elite circles in the late Victorian period. The 'cults' of this era bore little resemblance to the exploitative movements of the modern day; they functioned more as social clubs where the wealthy could explore spiritualism and metaphysical ideas. After graduating, Crowley joined one of England's largest occult organisations, The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, with the goal of establishing himself within esoteric circles. However, his ambitions were short-lived. Crowley's unorthodox lifestyle and combative personality quickly clashed with the leadership, who expected greater discretion and moral restraint from their members. He was accused of using the cult to broker property deals and to recruit participants for increasingly hedonistic rituals. He left the Golden Dawn less respected than when he joined.

Over the next decade, Crowley travelled across Asia, drawing on the rituals and aesthetic traditions of Buddhism and Hinduism to shape his own brand of Western occultism. He wrote extensively about his belief that magic was a scientifically provable phenomenon, and that mysticism should adopt a rational, empirical approach. These writings gave rise to his central philosophy: Thelema, based on the maxim *'Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of*

Aleister Crowley, c.1925. Wikimedia Commons – Public Domain



the Law'. Thelema encouraged individuals to pursue their true will – their passions and purpose – without constraint from societal or psychological structures.

For Crowley, this involved the practice of 'sex magick', in which he and fellow occultists engaged in sadomasochistic rituals under the influence of drugs, seeking mystical enlightenment. While controversial, his ideas gained traction among younger occultists disillusioned with the stuffiness of Victorian esotericism. Some view Crowley's work as a genuine attempt to modernise the occult for a new century. Others are more sceptical, seeing in Thelema a philosophical justification for Crowley's libertine lifestyle. Regardless of motive, his ideas would go on to influence a new generation of alternative religious leaders.

Following the success of his writings, Crowley joined Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.), a group with Masonic roots, and quickly ascended to de facto leadership. Under his direction, the O.T.O. adopted Thelema and sex magick as central tenets and expanded internationally, particularly to the United States. Between the 1910s and 1930s, Crowley established Thelema as a growing religious movement. Its 'scientific' occultism appealed to figures like Jack Parsons, a leading American rocket scientist and early pioneer of what would become NASA. Parsons introduced Crowley to L. Ron Hubbard, who was just beginning to explore the occult. Crowley was impressed by Hubbard's so-called 'natural talent for magick',



Photo of Aleister Crowley © National Portrait Gallery, London

and Hubbard regarded Crowley as both mentor and personal friend. Both men believed in the power of self-realisation: Hubbard called it *self-determinism* – a concept that would become central to Scientology.

However, the relationship between the two men soured. Crowley, by now elderly and in poor health, was struggling with a crippling addiction to heroin. He remained sexually active and socially engaged in his cult activities, but his finances and reputation deteriorated rapidly. Meanwhile, Hubbard betrayed Crowley's trusted protégé Parsons, conning him out of \$10,000 and absconding to Florida with Parsons's girlfriend. Upon hearing this, Crowley denounced Hubbard as 'a con man' and severed all ties.

Despite this, Hubbard continued to speak publicly of his friendship with Crowley and later absorbed Thelemic ideas into his own teachings. After Crowley's death, Hubbard rebranded many of those ideas as original insights. The

Church of Scientology officially denies any Crowleyn influence, but early documents and their shared history suggest otherwise.

Aleister Crowley died destitute, cut off from many of the occult circles he had once shaped. Yet his legacy endured. His writings and philosophy helped spawn the next generation of cult leaders and spiritual movements. Crowley may have been abandoned in life, but in death, he became a foundational figure for modern occultism – and an unlikely progenitor of the most notorious cult of the 20th century.

The Illusion of Health: Cholera in Leamington Spa

By Oscar Smith Turton, second-year History student

In the nineteenth century, Britain faced a series of devastating epidemics. Cholera, typhus, and scarlet fever claimed hundreds of thousands of lives during Queen Victoria's reign. In this context, the supposed medicinal benefits of Leamington's spa waters must have seemed especially appealing. What better place to escape the squalor of the industrial city? Yet this idyllic image was far from the reality.

Cholera is a deadly disease caused by the bacterium *Vibrio cholerae*, typically contracted through contaminated water. Outbreaks were common across Europe in the 1800s, and Britain suffered multiple waves – particularly severe in 1831–2, 1848–9, 1853–4, and again in 1866. In total, tens of thousands perished, making cholera a persistent and terrifying feature of Victorian life.

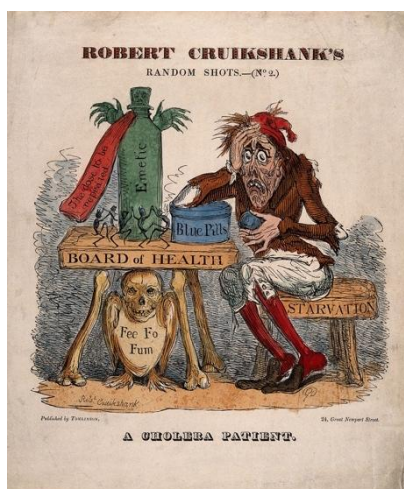
The scale of the crisis prompted international cooperation. The first International Sanitary Conferences, held in Paris, saw European powers come together to seek unified strategies for disease control and sanitation reform. Cholera was no longer just a local or national issue – it was a continental emergency.

This historical backdrop highlights the deep shadow cholera cast across 19th-century society. That shadow also fell on Leamington Spa, where death often lurked behind the town's carefully crafted image of purity and healing.

Formerly known simply as Leamington, the town rose to prominence after the discovery of a mineral spring in 1784. The waters were believed to have therapeutic properties, and by the early 1800s, Leamington Spa had become a fashionable retreat. Promoted as a destination for the wealthy to cleanse themselves of urban grime, the town experienced rapid growth.

Between 1828 and 1851, its population more than tripled.

But this growth was not confined to the upper classes. Many working-class labourers also moved to Leamington in search of employment. Unable to afford the elegant stone terraces of the town centre, they were instead crowded into hastily built back-to-back housing and poorly drained slums. With limited sanitation and overcrowded living conditions, the spread of disease was almost inevitable – and cholera was one of the deadliest.



'A cholera patient experimenting with remedies', c.1832, by Isaac Robert Cruikshank. © Wellcome Collection

Records held by the Warwickshire County Record Office paint a stark picture: residents exposed to overflowing sewage, stagnant waste, and a lack of access to clean water. Unsurprisingly, the town recorded numerous cases of disease. This reality clashed dramatically with Leamington's cultivated image as a haven of health.

But how could a town famed for healing become a breeding ground for epidemic? That was the uncomfortable question facing Leamington's Board of Health.

Publicly acknowledging a cholera outbreak risked undermining the town's appeal – and its economy. As a result, the extent of the disease was quietly downplayed. Instead of 'cholera', official records frequently attributed deaths to 'diarrhoea' – a symptom of cholera, and a technically truthful but deliberately evasive diagnosis.

Leamington Spa's reputation as a health resort was, in many ways, a carefully maintained illusion. Beneath the surface lay a deeply unequal town, where the poor bore the brunt of disease while the wealthy sought cure and comfort. The sanitised image presented to visitors concealed the unsanitary conditions endured by many residents.

It is important to acknowledge this other, darker side of Leamington Spa – a side that people at the time worked hard to obscure. Doing so allows us not only to understand the town's history more fully, but also to reflect on how class, health, and image have long been intertwined in the urban experience.

Sir Terry Frost: Leamington Spa's Abstract Artist

By Finn Menich, third-year History student

Born in Leamington Spa on 13 October 1915, Sir Terry Frost would go on to become one of Britain's most prominent abstract artists, with his work exhibited in galleries from New York to London. But who was the man behind the canvases? And what did his art truly represent?

I'll admit, abstract art has never really been my cup of tea. Like many, I've often found myself staring at colourful shapes and wondering if I'm missing something – or worse, if I'm being duped. At times, it all seems suspiciously like money laundering. But Terry Frost complicates that view.



Frost wasn't born into wealth, nor did he benefit from elite connections. He didn't even begin painting seriously until his thirties, after

enduring the immense hardships of the Second World War. For him, painting wasn't a commercial pursuit – it was a source of joy, a form of recovery, and a deeply personal expression of lived experience.

Before the war, Frost worked for Armstrong Whitworth in Coventry, painting the electrical wiring of warplanes. It was here he first encountered the RAF's iconic target insignia – layered coloured circles that would later reappear in his abstract compositions. A small detail, perhaps, but a revealing one.

He joined the Territorial Army in 1933, choosing a cavalry regiment due to his love of horse riding. At the outbreak of war in 1939, Frost served in campaigns across France, Palestine and Lebanon, before volunteering for the elite 52nd Middle East Commandos. He operated behind enemy lines in Sudan, where

he later recalled the distinctive 'spatial experience' of the jungle – a key influence on his artistic thinking. Eventually, he was transferred to Crete, where he was captured by German forces during the battle in May 1941. Frost spent the remainder of the war as a prisoner, ending up in the notorious Stalag 383 in Bavaria.

While many remembered the POW camps for their brutality, Frost's recollections were unusually positive, often humorous. It was in Stalag 383 that he met fellow artist Adrian Heath, who encouraged him to take up painting. Frost later described his time in the camp as a "tremendous spiritual experience" – a turning point that shaped both his outlook and his art.

Pinned to the wall of his studio was a quote from Henri Matisse: *'Draw happiness from oneself, from a good day's work, from the light it can bring to the fog which surrounds us.'* This idea of art as a source of joy and light defined Frost's philosophy. He wasn't concerned with literal representation or technical precision; instead, he sought to evoke emotion, to offer a new way of seeing and feeling.

His early influences included the post-war British abstract and non-figurative movements, and – more unusually – the Soviet avant-garde works of El Lissitzky and Kazimir Malevich. In paintings like *Madrigal* (1949) – inspired by a poem – Frost imagined a landscape not bound by physical geography, but by feeling, rhythm and interpretation. *Madrigal*, now displayed in Leamington Spa, is widely considered his first mature abstract work.

His time as a commando, with its demands of spatial awareness and composure under pressure, seems to have informed his artistic sensibility. His canvases often show a remarkable sense of balance and distance, infused with joy and energy. More than anything, Frost's art reflects his profound optimism – his belief in finding light, even in darkness.

Sir Terry Frost was not simply an abstract artist; he was an artist of experience. His work is a testament to resilience, imagination, and the pursuit of joy – and that's what sets him apart.

Seven Hundred Years of History: St Mary's Guildhall is Well Worth Your Attention

By Libby Ainsworth, third-year English and History student

When walking along the cobbles of Bayley Lane in the heart of Coventry city centre, the ruins of the city's Blitz-bombed cathedral loom large overhead. Shaping the street's course, jutting into and hanging over the pavement, the physical imposition of what is perhaps the city's most famous – and certainly most devastating – historical hour could quite easily subsume its surroundings. Yet nestled opposite, stone-built and comparatively unassuming, stands a medieval treasure that undoubtedly deserves even the most overawed passer-by's attention. Operating over the course of its history as a seat of wartime power, a royal prison, and the host of a famous abolitionist, St Mary's Guildhall would, in any other situation, be a deserved focal point – and is well worth a visit.

As its name suggests, the Guildhall, estimated to have been built in 1342, was initially established as the home of the merchant guild of St Mary. Holding a monopoly over trade in what would soon become the fourth-largest city in England, the guild set and maintained standards for goods and trading practices, and used its significant political power to lobby the city council in the economic interest of its members. The local power represented by the building only grew in 1392, when the guilds of Holy Trinity, St John the Baptist, and St Katherine merged with St Mary to form the United Guild of the Holy Trinity.

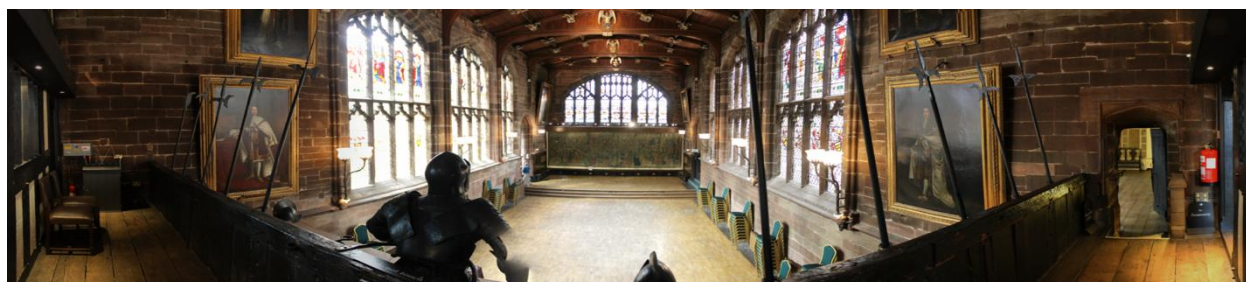
The Guildhall's entry into national significance arrived just a few decades later. Between 1456 and 1459, at the height of the Wars of the Roses, King Henry VI and Queen Margaret fled London and held their court within the

building. Given its centrality to their power, it could quite easily be argued that, for a brief time and at the height of great unrest, the city operated as the nation's de facto capital – with the Guildhall at its heart. In fact, such was the mutual respect between the royal couple and the city, a tapestry featuring the pair was designed for the Guildhall. This tapestry – the oldest still in its original position in Britain – is sure to be the highlight of any visit.

The Guildhall was again the home of royalty, though under quite different, if equally perilous, circumstances in 1569, when Mary, Queen of Scots was imprisoned within the Mayoress's Parlour by order of Elizabeth I. Intended to foil a band of Catholic nobles seeking to replace the Protestant Elizabeth with the Catholic Mary, the imprisonment was, to some extent, enacted for both queens' protection, with Elizabeth asking the people of Coventry to care for her cousin. Given my personal interest in the early modern period, walking the same floors as the Scottish queen was quite incredible.

Almost exactly three hundred years later, in 1847, the Guildhall hosted a lecture delivered by the formerly enslaved, renowned American abolitionist Frederick Douglass, as he toured Britain and Ireland – an incredibly significant moment in Britain's anti-slavery movement. The speech was reportedly met by a 'sea of upturned faces' and raised an impressive amount of money in support of the abolitionist cause. The event has since inspired staff and students at Coventry University to launch the Frederick Douglass in Coventry Project, designed to preserve the city's civil rights heritage.

St Mary's Guildhall possesses perhaps one of the richest histories of any site in the area – spanning almost seven hundred years, surviving battles, wars, and bombing, and maintaining its significance within the community. So, after taking in the cathedral, make sure you cross the cobbles and step inside – you're sure to be in for a treat.



Wikimedia Commons - Rock drum

Five of a Kind: Coventry's Reconciliation Sculpture

By Tilly Dickinson, third-year (Year Abroad) History and Politics student

In the grounds of Coventry Cathedral stands a modest brass sculpture: a man and a woman, kneeling and embracing. With your gaze naturally drawn upwards to appreciate the scale of the Cathedral's destruction, you might miss the two figures entirely. But when I visited in 2024 they immediately caught my eye – I'd seen them once before, in another country entirely. Coventry's *Reconciliation* is part of a much broader, international history than you might expect.

Reconciliation was created by English sculptor Josefina de Vasconcellos (1904-2005) in 1955. Initially, she credited her inspiration to a story of a woman who had walked across Europe to find her husband after the Second World War (WWII). Hence the exhaustion of the figures as they embrace. But after completing her work, she realised its broader meaning: the figures represented not just two individuals reunited, but also the reconciliation of nations after years of devastating war.

The sculpture remained in limbo, unsold in the gallery, for the next 17 years. In 1977, it was donated to the Department of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford. The University cast the sculpture in bronze and proposed renaming it from *Reunion* to *Reconciliation* – to emphasise its wider meaning. It was unveiled by the Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations, Séan MacBride, as an enduring and powerful symbol of peace.

Fifty years after the end of WWII, two new *Reconciliation* casts were commissioned. One was unveiled in the ruins of Coventry Cathedral, the other in Peace Park in Hiroshima, Japan. Two cities, chosen for their shared – though very different – experiences of

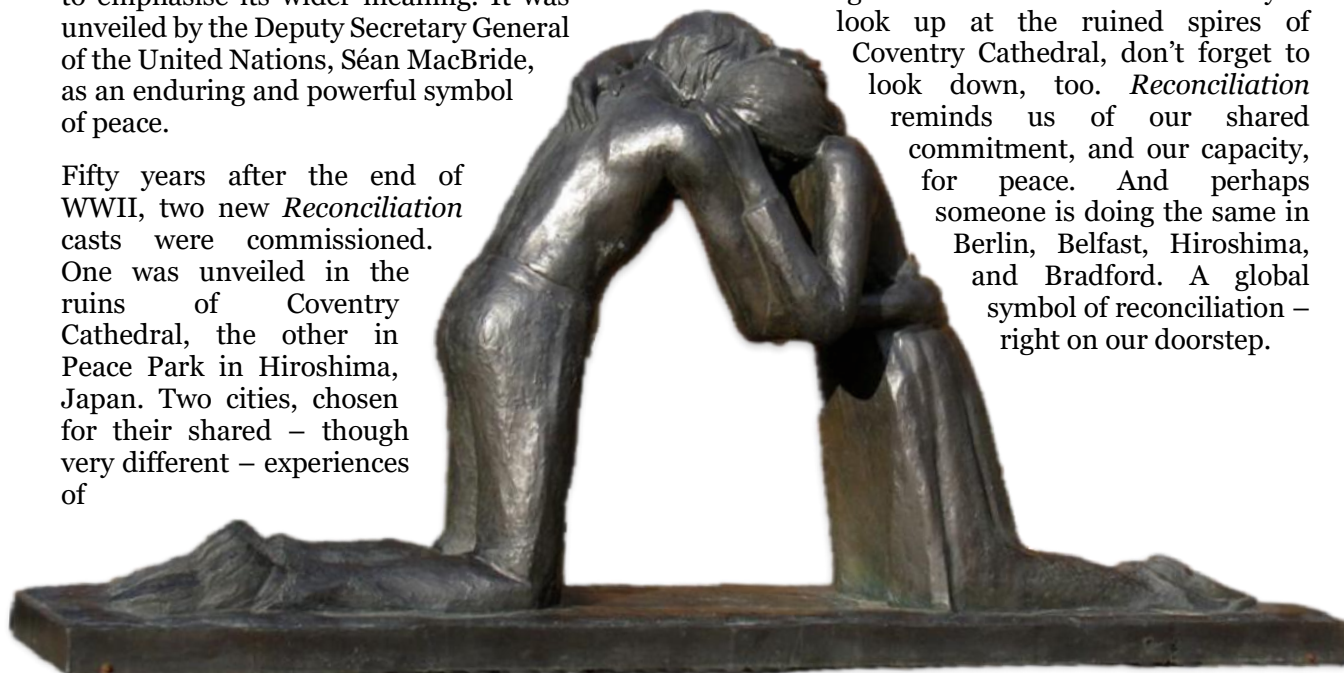
destruction, and their commitment to rebuild and to reconcile after the horrors of war.

Since then, two further copies have been installed. In 1999, a fourth was placed at the Church of Reconciliation in Berlin, to mark the tenth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. And in 2000, a fifth was placed in the grounds of Stormont Parliament Buildings in Belfast, symbolising the nation's commitment to the Good Friday Agreement and the ongoing peace process. All five sculptures can still be visited today.

I first came across *Reconciliation* in Berlin in 2023 – and the sculpture struck me as deeply then as it did in Coventry a year later. In Berlin, the two figures meet over barbed wire, symbolising the wall that divided East from West for 28 years. They are far enough apart that they must bend almost double to reach one another. Their faces are obscured as they embrace – they could represent any community or nation torn apart by conflict.

Theologian Oliver Schuegraf writes the following in his book *The Cross of Nails*: 'A bridge of reconciliation has been built. The embracing arms hint at a strong and enduring link. Yet the gulf is not fully bridged... the knees of the couple are still widely separated... However, the embrace gives a strong foretaste of that which is to come, and of how one day it might be.'

It's a beautiful sculpture, and a powerful idea – if perhaps slightly bittersweet in an age of renewed global tension. But the next time you look up at the ruined spires of Coventry Cathedral, don't forget to look down, too. *Reconciliation* reminds us of our shared commitment, and our capacity, for peace. And perhaps someone is doing the same in Berlin, Belfast, Hiroshima, and Bradford. A global symbol of reconciliation – right on our doorstep.



Wikimedia Commons - Martinvl

Destruction and Renewal: Coventry's Post-War Experiments with Civic Space

By Mai Bennett, third-year
Philosophy and Literature student

Destruction

A heartland of the aircraft and munitions industries, Coventry was a strategic target during the Battle of Britain. During the Coventry Blitz, air raids escalated throughout 1940, culminating in *Operation Moonlight Sonata*, when more than five hundred Luftwaffe aircraft dropped high explosives, incendiary bombs, and landmines on Coventry's compact commercial, industrial, and residential centres. Most striking was the destruction of the Cathedral Church of Saint Michael, which was set aflame by incendiary bombs, destroying all but its outer walls and spire. Between November 1940 and April 1941, two-thirds of the city's rated properties were damaged or completely destroyed.

Renewing Spaces

Even before the war, Coventry's infrastructure was inadequate for its growing population. A lack of planning in the early twentieth century had led to deficient housing and factories, poor waterworks, and ever-congested road networks. By 1940, the designs of architect Donald Gibson and his assistant Percy Johnson-Marshall had been presented to Coventry City Council, as part of a public exhibition entitled *Coventry of Tomorrow*. Policies forwarded by Coventry's Labour-led council envisioned ambitious changes to the city's public spaces, services, and amenities.

As the new City Architect, Gibson was granted a relatively blank canvas for the redevelopment of Coventry's civic centre. Backed by the Redevelopment Committee in early 1941, his plan to democratise Coventry's spaces and

services into a centralised city core was notably radical. Though Coventry's population had exploded in the early twentieth century, the city centre remained medieval in scale. The city would need to be zoned appropriately to create functional urban spaces for the next generation of Coventrians.

Consumer Generation

After the war, Coventry's population and economy flourished. Over seventy per cent of the city's labour force was employed in the lucrative motor and engineering industries. Wages were high, and Coventrians had money to spend – but the city lacked sufficient shops and entertainment facilities. With an economy based largely on industry and manufacturing, Coventry had developed a reputation as an educational and cultural desert.

To overcome this, the council would not only have to create new public spaces but also cultivate a new public to inhabit them.

Rebirth of Coventry Cathedral

The decision to rebuild the Cathedral Church of Saint Michael was made swiftly after its destruction, but construction could not begin until after the war. In a 1940 BBC Christmas broadcast, Richard Howard, Provost of Coventry Cathedral, called for international peace, unity, and reconciliation: *'Hard as it may be to banish all thoughts of revenge, we're bracing ourselves to finish this tremendous job of saving the world from tyranny and cruelty.'*

In 1951, architect Basil Spence was chosen to design the new cathedral. Rather than rebuild on the site of the bombed cathedral, a new structure would be built and connected to the ruins by a canopy. The ravaged walls and spire of the old cathedral would remain untouched as an open-air memorial.

Construction took place from 1956 to 1962, when the new cathedral was consecrated. Architecturally, the building incorporated elements of modernism and brutalism. Particularly noteworthy was the way light refracted and reflected across contrasting materials and surfaces. The south-facing entrance allowed sunlight to pass through the *Screen of Saints and Angels*, designed by John



Plaque marking the ruins of St Michael's, Coventry. © George Marshall. All rights reserved

Hutton. The east-facing baptistery window – made of nearly two hundred panels of coloured glass – was created by John Piper and Patrick Reyntiens. The nave was illuminated by floor-to-ceiling stained-glass panels designed by Lawrence Lee, Keith New, and Geoffrey Clarke, which remained invisible from the main entrance.

Wikimedia Commons - Philip Halling



In a culture of increasing secularisation, the Diocese of Coventry developed an enduring commitment to international reconciliation. Appointed in 1958, Provost H.C.N. Williams argued that while rural parishes traditionally served as sources of welfare, culture, and education, the urban church struggled to foster meaningful relationships with its community: *'If fragmentation is the great disease of the twentieth-century community, it follows that mutual dependence, reconciliation, trust and unity are among its greatest needs.'*

An influx of publications by local clergy reflected the diocese's emphasis on practical theology. The cathedral community established chaplaincies within the church and reached beyond it through community and adult education programmes. Internationally, the cathedral's ministry focused on post-war reconciliation and reconstruction, notably in Dresden and Corrymeela.

The (Civic) Belgrade Theatre

In contrast to the religious space of the new cathedral, the creation of the Belgrade Theatre represented an effort to develop a secular cultural space. Perpendicular to the shopping districts of the Lower and Upper Precincts, Corporation Street was intended as part of Coventry's dedicated entertainment zone. Early plans included shops, cinemas, and a civic theatre. However, as public interest in cinemas declined with the rise of television, the theatre was seen as a more viable cultural investment.

Designed by then-City Architect Arthur Ling and funded by Coventry City Council, the Belgrade Theatre was situated on a spacious plot at the corner of Corporation Street and Upper Well Street. As Britain's first post-war municipal theatre, the Belgrade was distinctly civic. Behind the stage, it offered bedsit flats for visiting actors overlooking Corporation Street – a rare feature in post-war theatre design. When it opened in 1958, the theatre's architecture embodied a unique approach to public space. Visitors could freely roam the layered foyer without purchasing a ticket. Spectacle extended beyond the auditorium: the foyer displayed public art, including the *Four Seasons* mosaic by Martin Froy and spiralling chandeliers by Bernard Schottlander.

Wholly owned by the city council, the Belgrade Theatre fostered both an inward-looking civic culture and an outward-facing spirit of internationalism. During construction, the Yugoslav government gifted timber for the building, prompting the theatre to take the name of Yugoslavia's capital as a symbol of solidarity. The Belgrade's early programme aimed to expose local audiences to translated international plays alongside contemporary British 'kitchen-sink' dramas – including the premieres of Arnold Wesker's trilogy.

Renewal or Stagnation?

While considerable efforts were made to create new forms of public life and civic identity in post-war Coventry, the economic downturn of the 1970s and the decline of industry eroded the foundations on which this vision was built. Nevertheless, the architectural landmarks of the 1950s and 1960s remain as enduring glimpses into a past defined by civic pride, cultural ambition, and collective reconstruction.

(New) Brutalism in Coventry

By Cieran Sheekey, second-year Politics student

Brutalism is an architectural style that emphasises the literal expression of materials, rejecting traditional ideals of photographic beauty in favour of overt structural clarity. It is distinctly uncompromising and devoid of ornamentation, resulting in rough shapes with asymmetrical proportions composed of modern materials such as concrete, steel, glass, and brick. The movement holds particular historical significance in Coventry, although the city's use of the style aligns more closely with what is known as New Brutalism.

Interestingly, New Brutalism neither replaced nor developed directly from any so-called 'original' Brutalism, as the latter concept does not genuinely exist and is used primarily out of linguistic necessity. The term New Brutalism was coined before the style theoretically or materially existed. It was later strategically adopted by pioneering architects Alison and Peter Smithson, after the fact, with its primary distinction from the imagined 'original' Brutalism being its foundation in a deliberate philosophical position.

As outlined in the Smithsons' seminal essay *Ordinariness and Light*, New Brutalism employed the broader brutalist style to advance environmentalism and egalitarianism through the efficient use of space. This approach sought to prevent urban sprawl and provide cost-effective, mass-built housing. For these reasons, the architectural style became especially popular among British socialists, whose influence dominated Coventry's local politics in the 1950s and 1960s, the period when most of the city's brutalist buildings were constructed. Thus, the use of Brutalism as a vehicle for a political philosophy aligns precisely with its application in Coventry.

Take, for example, Coventry's Belgrade Theatre, which opened in the late 1950s and has been identified as a reflection of the political orientation of the area's Labour councillors. The theatre was built using materials

freely supplied by Yugoslavia and bears a strong resemblance to brutalist architecture found beyond the Iron Curtain, reflecting the influence of several local councillors who had visited Eastern Europe. Arthur Ling, the city architect at the time (though not the sole designer), made significant alterations from the original plans and was a committed public-facing communist. In this respect, the Belgrade Theatre stands as a prominent example of Coventry's Brutalism embodying the socialist ideals of its proponents.

Coventry Cathedral also features many brutalist elements, notably its structural clarity and material honesty. The city suffered extensive bombing during the Second World War, which destroyed much of the original perpendicular design. The surviving exterior walls, tower, and spire were incorporated into Basil Spence's winning design for the cathedral's post-war reconstruction. The new cathedral's pale-grey concrete interior and its high canopy connecting two circular chapels were conceived with cost-efficiency in mind. The building played a key role in the 'reinvigoration of architectural design' across Britain after the war, as reconstruction became a priority for governments throughout Europe.

The devastating bombing campaigns led to an urgent need for housing, both in Britain and across Europe. This demand necessitated large-scale developments prioritising quantity, quality, and affordability. Few architectural styles could be erected in sufficient volume while maintaining acceptable living standards as effectively as Brutalism. Consequently, brutalist housing blocks sprang up across Britain, especially in heavily bombed cities like Coventry. Notable examples include the now largely demolished Spon End estate and developments off Butts Road.

Despite its often polarising reputation, Brutalism – or more specifically New Brutalism – has a fascinating history in Coventry. Emerging as a physical manifestation of the city's socialist political orientation, it dominated post-war reconstruction and gave rise to a divisive yet uniquely identifiable brutalist aesthetic that continues to shape Coventry's contemporary built environment.



Wikimedia Commons - Fast Track images

Exile and Academia: Warwick's Role in the Chilean Refugee Crisis

*By Sophie Wadood, second-year
History and Politics student*

In September 1973, Chilean President Salvador Allende's elected government was overthrown in a coup led by General Augusto Pinochet, ushering in a dictatorship defined by repression, torture, and forced disappearances. Academics and students were among the hardest hit, as Chilean universities were dismantled and dissent harshly punished. In response, the UK-based NGO World University Service (WUS), with support from British universities including Warwick, created a programme offering scholarships and refuge to those forced into exile.

In November 1973, the Pinochet regime legally granted itself the power to determine the civil status of citizens, including the authority to expel individuals and block their return. As academic freedom disappeared under military rule, WUS became one of the earliest and most effective channels for endangered Chileans to flee. Over the following decade, nearly 1,000 Chilean refugees were supported by the programme – modest in number, but disproportionately composed of those who had faced persecution, torture, or imprisonment.

The WUS programme formally began in 1974, backed by Harold Wilson's Labour government. This political support reflected growing awareness of Chile's deteriorating human rights situation – and Britain's initial willingness to offer asylum. The scale of academic repression was staggering. Between 1974 and 1975, the number of university lecturers in Chile halved, a stark measure of the intellectual purge.

Warwick University was among the institutions that partnered with WUS to host exiled scholars, but local support was equally vital. In Coventry, the grassroots Coventry Chilean Refugee Reception Committee, inspired by similar initiatives in London, helped address immediate needs such as housing, finances, and language barriers. In nearby Leamington Spa, refugee families were welcomed into the community, with residents organising social events and gatherings to encourage integration and friendship. For

many Chileans, these gestures of solidarity offered not only practical support but also a restored sense of community and dignity after the trauma of exile.



Many of the academics who came to Britain through WUS had been politically active in Chile and carried that activism into exile. Britain's stance toward Pinochet shifted during the 1980s under Margaret Thatcher, when relations with Chile were restored and Santiago supported the UK during the Falklands War – a controversial moment in British–Latin American diplomacy.

Exile, however, was often shaped by trauma. Many had endured imprisonment, torture, or the loss of colleagues and loved ones. While British universities provided physical safety, the WUS programme imposed limits on academic opportunities. For Chilean women, exile also became a space of reflection and transformation, prompting many to re-evaluate their roles in public life and to forge new identities as activists, scholars, and community leaders.

Though many Chilean exiles hoped their displacement would be brief, Pinochet remained in power until 1990, his rule ending only after a national plebiscite opened the way for democracy under Patricio Aylwin. His 1998 arrest in London for crimes against humanity was a symbolic moment for survivors. The 1973 coup left a lasting mark on higher education in Chile and abroad; as Jeffrey Puryear observed, its impact on academic and international attitudes was 'devastating.' Yet the WUS programme, supported by British universities including Warwick, showed how institutions can respond in times of crisis – preserving lives, scholarship, and critical thought in the face of dictatorship.

University of Warwick, School of Modern Languages and Cultures --- 'Chilean Exiles in the UK'

The Lord Leycester: The Life, Times and Scandals of the Hospital and Its Residents

By Issy Eley, second-year History student

The Lord Leycester Hospital at its core was founded as a moral institution. It was established in 1571 by an Act of Parliament with the support of its first patron (and namesake), Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. Dudley was an influential member of the court of Queen Elizabeth I (who also played a role in the early days of the hospital, personally recommending some of the first Brethren). These influential political and aristocratic connections demonstrate that this was a well-respected institution from the outset, with wide-ranging support from the upper echelons of society. The hospital was founded to provide accommodation and financial support for members of the 'deserving poor', specifically men who were formerly soldiers or part of the Earl of Leicester's household. These members became known as Brethren (or brothers) and were given a financial stipend for themselves and their families in return for following the hospital's regulations and performing work for the institution. By providing this support, the hospital formed part of a new era of charitable institutions that were desperately needed to fill the gaps in welfare provision left by religious institutions and guilds in the wake of the Reformation and the dissolution of the monasteries.

Although in this way the Lord Leycester signalled a new era of welfare institutions, in other respects it was very much a continuation of older traditions. Much like its predecessors, it maintained strong religious ties. Hospital masters for almost 400 years of its existence were exclusively clergymen, as they were considered to have the skills necessary to morally run such an organisation. Alongside this, the moral and religious aspects of the hospital remained important more generally. Church visits and regular prayer formed key parts of the expected duties of the hospital's Brethren, and individual brothers' continued membership depended on their adherence to the hospital's moral codes.

However, despite these strong moral foundations, the hospital's history is punctuated with instances of scandal and power struggles. In fact, the very beginning of the hospital is marked by scandal surrounding the acquisition of the buildings themselves. The buildings had been under the ownership of the town burgesses of Warwick at the time but were gifted to Robert Dudley in 1571. This was an attempt by the town burgesses to regain Dudley's favour and to apologise after they publicly snubbed him by failing to greet him upon his arrival in Warwick, causing a local scandal. This first political conflict would be far from the hospital's last, as its position as a nationally renowned welfare institution and the nature of the situations of its destitute residents made it an unfortunately frequent stage for political machinations and moral scandals over its four centuries of existence.

The Master and Politics

The position of master at the Lord Leycester Hospital was well-respected and – originally – well remunerated. Masters received wages and upkeep payments as well as being entitled to a quarter of the annual earnings from the hospital's land. In the early years of the hospital, the role was made even more desirable as one that radical Protestant figures could hold. This can be seen as both the second and fourth masters – Thomas Cartwright, an infamous Presbyterian preacher, and one of Cartwright's followers respectively – had

previously been imprisoned by the Privy Council for 'seditious activities'. This idea of some level of stability and protection for Protestant radicals in the role made it even more sought-after.



Thomas Cartwright. Wikimedia Commons – Public Domain

Alongside the stability the role offered, the position also entailed considerable power, as the master had a say in who was appointed as a member of the Brethren and in important decisions about the Brethren's lives, such as if

a brother should be expelled or whom they could marry.

At certain times, the responsibilities and privileges that came with the role of master caused power struggles between the master and others, such as the Brethren, patron, and 'visitors' (public figures with the power to inspect the hospital). For instance, the ninth master, Samuel Jemmat, created a conflict with the Brethren when his small master's income (limited to £50 under the original rules rather than rising with inflation in subsequent centuries) led him to steal from the Brethren's portion of the hospital's income. This caused the Brethren in turn to disobey him and appeal to the visitors for help, eventually forcing Jemmat to repay the money.

It was not just the Brethren that the master sometimes came into conflict with. The power of the role in deciding who could become Brethren led to power struggles between the master and patrons. For example, in the late 19th century under master George Morley, arguments over who should decide which applications to accept as Brethren resulted in lesser-qualified candidates being appointed more quickly than other, more highly qualified and destitute applicants.

The masters were far from alone in causing conflict during the Lord Leycester's history though, and despite these instances, they were generally responsible for maintaining order, especially concerning the conduct of the Brethren.

The Brethren and Their Behaviour

The Brethren of the Lord Leycester, in return for their stipend and upkeep, were expected to perform certain duties at the hospital, such as attending church visits, and to abide by rules governing their moral behaviour. In the early years of the hospital, there seem to have been few problems in this regard, given the lack of records indicating misdemeanours. The first expulsion of a brother did not occur until Timothy White was master (1650–1661), but within his tenure White expelled three brothers.

One of the brothers White expelled was removed on grounds of long-term absence, but



Lord Leycester Hospital. Wikimedia Commons – Public Domain

expulsions were more frequently linked to immoral behaviour. Expulsions were particularly commonly associated with misdemeanours related to drunkenness. In one case, this justification was extended to ban a wife of a brother from living at the hospital due to her immoral and drunken behaviour. These expulsions were partly to preserve the hospital's reputation but also to maintain the comfort of the other Brethren – and in some periods, their families – living at the hospital.

The fact that drunkenness was among the most common reasons for expulsion is telling. It reflects anxieties about alcoholism among the poor, especially in the 18th and 19th centuries, but may also suggest this was a long-term problem for some residents more widely. This, in turn, may indicate historical origins for the modern reality that veterans are far more likely to suffer from alcohol and substance misuse due to higher rates of poor mental health. This underscores the importance of studying the history of places like the Lord Leycester to better understand modern times.

Conclusion

Focusing on the conflicts in the Lord Leycester's history does somewhat detract from the largely positive impact it has had. It has improved the lives of many veterans and has been a positive force in its local community: providing church services, participating in pageants, and helping preserve local history. Despite this, the conflicts and scandals of the Lord Leycester remain important evidence of wider societal changes and continuities – both in the case of welfare for veterans and in political and religious developments – that have played out throughout the institution's history.

The Ranter of Warwick: Abiezer Coppe's Fire and Fury in the English Revolution

By Jakob Reid, third-year History
and Politics student

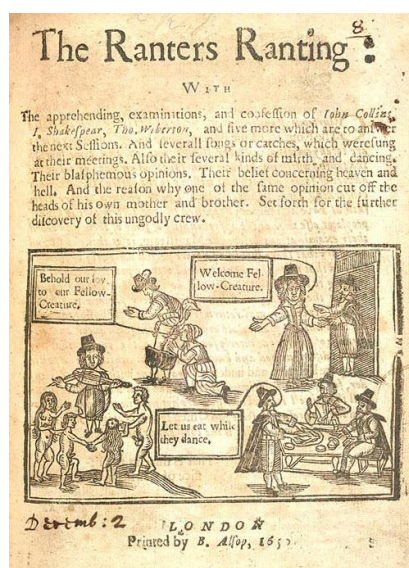
In the turbulent mid-seventeenth century, England witnessed the collapse of the monarchy, the rise of revolutionary politics, and a surge of radical religious expression. Amidst this upheaval, Warwickshire produced one of the period's most notorious and enigmatic figures: Abiezer Coppe (1619–1672). A preacher, writer, mystic – and to many, a heretic – Coppe's life exemplifies the wild, visionary spirit of the English Civil War, with his story beginning right here in Warwick.

Born 20 May 1619, Coppe, eldest son of an artisan, attended The King's School and later Oxford University. Marked by fervent piety, he left without a degree but returned to Warwick committed to preaching and a ministerial life within the rising tide of Puritan dissent. In June 1644, Coppe was appointed chaplain to the Parliamentary garrison at Compton Wynyates. Yet even among the Roundheads, his message proved too radical, and in 1646 he was imprisoned in Coventry gaol for controversial preaching – a sign of the deeper spiritual rebellion to come.

A pivotal transformation occurred in 1647, when Coppe experienced a four-day trance he interpreted as a divine revelation. Emerging from it spiritually reborn – freed from sin and anointed as a 'child of God' – he joined the ranks of the infamous Ranters, a radical sect that rejected all earthly authority, whether church, scripture, or state, in favour of the 'divine light' within. The Ranters were feared for their pantheism (God present in all things), antinomianism (freedom from moral law), and contempt for social hierarchy. For Coppe, God's truth lay not in Scripture or sermons but within the self – a conviction that provoked

condemnation from both Royalists and Parliamentarians.

In 1649, the year of Charles I's execution, Coppe published his most notorious work: *A Fiery Flying Roll*. This prophetic pamphlet was a denunciation of inequality, hypocrisy, and religious cant. Written in a style both poetic and blasphemous, it demanded that 'Kings, Princes, Lords... must bow to the poorest Peasants,' scandalising readers. This explosive mixture of political levelling, mystical ecstasy, and moral transgression outraged the Puritan authorities. In January 1650, Coppe was arrested for spreading 'mad and blasphemous' writings and imprisoned in Newgate



Anti-Ranters publication proposed by Royalists, 1650.

Wikimedia Commons – Public Domain

Even under interrogation, Coppe remained defiant – refusing to remove his hat, muttering to himself, and reportedly throwing fruit and nutshells at officials. Though never tried, this reputation as a dangerous madman and religious extremist may have spared him a show trial. Released in July 1651, he soon drew further suspicion, particularly after attempting to preach at Burford Church, site of the 1649 Leveller mutiny crushed by Cromwell. In later years, however, Coppe's radical fire dimmed. George Fox, founder of the Quakers, encountered him drinking and smoking with a Cromwellian officer. Eventually he recanted, converted to Baptism, and took the name Abiezer Hiam. Licensed to practise medicine and surgery, he lived quietly until his death in August 1672 – largely forgotten.

Yet, despite his quiet disappearance from the scene of radical religious dissent, Abiezer Coppe remains even to this day, a crucial part of England's broader revolutionary story. He was a man who challenged every form of power – spiritual, political, and social – in pursuit of a radical vision of divine equality. Dismissed by some as a madman, celebrated by others as a prophet, Coppe stands as a testament to a moment when ordinary men believed they could speak with the voice of God – and be heard. Today, he remains one of Warwick's most extraordinary – and sadly least remembered – sons.

Daisy Greville: An Unconventional Countess

By Helena Smith, third-year History student

In 1895, Warwick Castle hosted one of the grandest balls ever to take place within its walls – a fancy-dress party inspired by pre-revolutionary French aristocracy, attended by no fewer than four hundred of England's wealthiest. The event was so extravagant it overwhelmed every high-end hairdresser and costumer in London. Its purpose? To welcome the 5th Earl of Warwick and his wife to their newly inherited estate. But while it was Francis Greville who assumed his father's title and status, it was Daisy – dressed as Marie Antoinette – who stole the show.

Daisy Greville was no stranger to the spotlight. Born into the aristocratic Maynard family, she was wealthy and well-connected in her own right, once even considered a potential bride for Prince Leopold, the youngest son of Queen Victoria. Yet despite her marriage to Francis Greville, her love life was far from conventional. She conducted affairs with Admiral and politician Lord Charles Beresford, millionaire sailor Joe Laycock (who would father two of her children), and – most famously – the Prince of Wales, the future King Edward VII.



Daisy Greville, Countess of Warwick, 1899.
Wikimedia Commons – Public Domain

Daisy and Edward maintained a nine-year relationship, during which she was considered his primary mistress. The pair distanced themselves after speculation arose over the paternity of her son, Maynard Greville – who was, in truth, Laycock's child. Her husband, Francis, was seemingly never seriously considered a possible father.

While her affairs were something of an open secret, Daisy's political ambitions were even more public. Following the 1895 ball, she demanded a meeting with journalist Robert Blatchford, who had published a scathing

article about her extravagance. Ironically, it was through his criticism that Daisy was introduced to socialism. In 1923, she unsuccessfully stood for Parliament, attempting to represent Leamington and Warwick as a Labour candidate – against none other than Anthony Eden, her daughter-in-law's brother and a future Prime Minister. Though she often appeared out of touch – campaigning for the working class in Labour-red heels and strings of pearls – she was generally well-meaning, funding schools and supporting Warwick's poor and disabled.

Perhaps Daisy's most eccentric legacy, however, was her founding of a private zoo in 1890. She had long displayed a deep love of animals, chairing the Essex branch of the RSPCA and keeping retired circus ponies at her family estate, Easton Lodge. But it was at Warwick Castle that she launched her most ambitious endeavour. Her menagerie, which operated for thirteen years, was located on the river island now home to the trebuchet and jousting arena. It hosted a herd of Japanese deer, a flock of Chinese geese, raccoons, two emus, an aardvark, and a baby elephant named Kim. This was just one of many impulsive expenses under Daisy's tenure – her evening parties alone could cost the equivalent of a year's income for an average household – but her zoo was a notorious talking point of its time, with one story claiming her emus once chased a bishop through the shrubberies.

A socialite, a political hopeful, and a philanthropic heiress, Daisy Greville left an indelible mark on Warwick's history, propelling the Castle and its residents into the 20th century with flair. Her time as Countess has been immortalised in a permanent exhibition at the Castle, recreating one of her glittering weekend house parties, which hosted the likes of Winston Churchill and the Prince of Wales himself. Warwick's most famous Countess since the Wars of the Roses, Daisy's life offers a vivid window into the society and politics of her age – a reminder of the aristocracy's deeply interwoven, and often unconventional, lifestyles: equal parts lavish, scandalous, and fascinating.

Kenilworth Castle: Power, Politics & Romance

*By Pyper Levingstone, second-year
History student*

Introduction

Located in the heart of Warwickshire lies Kenilworth Castle – a fortress with a complex history. Since its construction in the early twelfth-century, the castle has gone from a symbol of military strength to the hallmark of royal power. The Castle has also seen the shaping of culture and festivities, as well as an Elizabethan romance that has very much shaped the ruins that remain to this day.

The castle was once the site of the longest siege in England's history, led by Simon de Montfort the Younger, who held it against Henry III. Later, it was expanded by John of Gaunt and Henry V, converting it from a typical medieval castle into a luxurious palace. Queen Elizabeth I subsequently gave it to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, who used it to entertain and entice the Queen. Although the castle's fortifications were destroyed during the English Civil War in 1649 and dismantled further a year later, its history is still written all over the ruins, revealing great detail about its military and royal past.

Origins and Construction

Kenilworth Castle was originally founded in the early twelfth-century by King Henry I's chamberlain and treasurer, Geoffrey de

Clinton. The intentions of the castle were to both strengthen the power of the royalty and diminish the influence of the Earl of Warwick. The Castle's initial foundations followed a very Norman structure, with it being situated within a large expanse of water, known as 'The Mere', followed with various towers and the courtyard – following the motte and bailey style that became prevalent after 1066. This was further strengthened by King John, who replaced wooden defences with stone ones, as well as redirecting water sources. This helped establish Kenilworth Castle as a powerful royal defence, making it harder to attack and securing its status as one of England's most important castles. This is evident in the 1266 siege during the Second Barons' War, when Simon de Montfort challenged King Henry III for political reform.

The 1266 Siege: Longest Siege in England's History

The year 1266 saw one of the most significant events in England's medieval history: the longest siege the country had ever experienced. This occurred during the Second Barons' War; a conflict aimed at limiting royal power and ensuring baronial accountability. The death of Simon de Montfort in 1265 led to his allies – barons rebelling against the king – refusing to give up the castle, which consequently led to the siege.

Due to the foundations of the castle, such as the stone walls and the large mere surrounding it, the castle was difficult to capture by the royal army, which is why the siege lasted from June to December of that year. During the six-month



Kenilworth Castle. © Jakob Reid. All rights reserved.

battle, defences were never broken by Henry III's army, however, they were able to surround the castle and cut off supplies, meaning resources were becoming scarce from within. The harsh conditions led to rebel surrender, and the Dictum of Kenilworth was implemented as a means of granting the rebels pardon, provided they paid their fines and gave up their lands, which prevented further bloodshed from taking place. The 1266 Siege of Kenilworth Castle ultimately depicts the military strength and authority of Henry III, marking this period as a time of complicated warfare and politics.

The siege of Kenilworth Castle highlights the history upon which it was built – a powerful example of military and royal authority. The fact the siege lasted so long emphasises its formidable defences and the problem of medieval warfare, which can still be interpreted from the ruins of the castle's fortifications. One key factor was the Castle's Great Mere, which has gradually drained and disappeared over time. Yet, the shape of the landscape still remains, reflecting the castle's defences that prevented the royal army from entering. At the same time, it allowed for supplies to be cut short for the rebels, and it was these starvation tactics that played a large role in the rebels' surrender.

The heavier siege equipment was set up around the thick stone walls and towers, which repeatedly fired stone missiles into the castle, some of which were excavated in 1960 and can be seen in the castle today. Another important aspect to outline is the expenses that this warfare created, which ultimately were used to demonstrate the power of royal authority, situating Kenilworth Castle as a place of military and monarchical strength.

14th Century Transformation

After the 1266 Siege, Kenilworth Castle underwent new development, transforming from a military base into something more lavish – fit for royalty. During the 14th century, John of Gaunt (the Duke of Lancaster and son of Edward III) inherited the castle, and these luxurious expansions began to take shape. The most notable feature being the Great Hall, as well as the kitchens, which were inspired by

those at Windsor Castle, reflecting the newfound wealth the castle had now inherited.

The new additions to the castle were symbolic of the wealth and status of Gaunt. The features of the Great Hall – large windows, various fireplaces and an enormous roof – demonstrated Gaunt's ambitions and his status in the royal family. This period marked a change in the castle's purpose, moving from a defensive fortress to a magnificent palace, supporting the castle's powerful reputation.



Robert Dudley, 1st Earl of Leicester.
Wikimedia Commons – Public Domain

An Elizabethan Romance?

The 16th century saw a new turn in leadership, with Queen Elizabeth I gifting Kenilworth Castle to her favourite, Lord Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. During each of her visits, Dudley would host several entertainments, as well

as build new structures upon the pre-existing conditions of the castle. These new additions included Leicester's Building and Gatehouse, as well as the remodelling of the state apartments for the queen's visits. In 1575, a new privy garden was designed, which has been recreated in the garden of the castle by English Heritage, aptly titled the 'Elizabethan Garden', symbolising love, loyalty and passion. It has never been certain as to whether the two had a romantic relationship, but what was clear is the bond they both shared was emotional and powerful – a relationship that took place within the very walls of the castle.

Conclusion

Kenilworth Castle is more than just a medieval ruin; it tells a complex story of power, ambition, warfare and prestige. The military strength of the castle was tested during the siege of 1266, pushing its defences in the face of battle. The fourteenth-century saw it transition into a fortress of aristocracy, symbolising the power of wealth and royalty under John of Gaunt. Later, it became a catalyst for elaborate schemes and ambition, being used by Robert Dudley as a means of enticing Queen Elizabeth I. Since its creation, Kenilworth Castle has represented the changing values of those in power – from defensive strategies to creating a powerful image. Even in ruins, the castle remains a significant testament to England's history.

Kenilworth Abbey: From Prosperity to Ruin

By Harry McNeill, third-year History and Politics student

Nestled within the open fields at the heart of Kenilworth lie the remains of a medieval priory. Just a ten-minute stroll from Kenilworth Castle – the other striking medieval landmark in the area – St Mary's Abbey stands as a potent reminder of the complex religious history of the British Isles. The most significant impression upon visiting is the toll religious upheaval has taken on this monastic house. What was once a thriving spiritual centre is now a shattered ruin, with only the 14th-century gatehouse and priory hall still standing.

The priory, like the castle with which it is twinned, was founded by a nobleman: Geoffrey de Clinton in the 1120s. The 12th-century Anglo-Norman chronicler Orderic Vitalis described Geoffrey as one of the 'new men' of King Henry I – individuals of lower status elevated to nobility. As they owed their newfound positions to the king, their loyalty was guaranteed, thereby securing Henry's hold on power. Henry appointed Geoffrey sheriff of Warwickshire in 1119 and subsequently granted him a large estate in the county. Historian David Crouch places this decision in the context of Henry's need to strengthen his control over the central Midlands and southern marches. Geoffrey's rise was entirely dependent on the king's favour, so it is understandable that he began building both a

monastery and a castle simultaneously around 1124–25.

By the 15th century, the priory had become one of the most prosperous in the Midlands, having been elevated to abbey status in 1447. While the Benedictine Rule governed the older and more prominent tradition of monasticism, Kenilworth followed the Augustinian Rule. The Rule of Saint Augustine, rediscovered in the latter half of the 11th century, placed more emphasis on reflecting the apostolic life. Though living communally like other monastic orders, the Augustinians provided acts of charity and made the sacraments widely available to the laity – unlike the Cistercians, who engaged with the laity more selectively. In many respects, the Augustinians bore as much resemblance to the poverty groups that emerged after 1200 as they did to traditional monasticism.

However, the abbey's golden era came to an end with much drama. The 16th century brought significant challenges to religious authority. Under Henry VIII, English monasticism faced increasing attacks from central authorities. Cardinal Wolsey's supervision and intervention in monastic affairs were followed by widespread suppression under chief minister Thomas Cromwell in the mid-1530s. Cromwell's correspondence reveals the uproar surrounding allegations of monastic corruption, which were rife at the time. For example, in 1536 the abbot of Fountains Abbey in North Yorkshire, William Thirsk, faced numerous accusations of both spiritual and secular transgressions. These events unfolded amid Henry's break with the Catholic Church in 1534 and the Tudor state's tightening control over theological doctrine.

By the late 1530s, the remit of monastic suppression had expanded to include the dissolution of all monasteries. Kenilworth Abbey closed its doors permanently in 1538. All valuables were removed, and the buildings were systematically dismantled. By the 17th century, what had once been a key centre of piety in the Midlands had been reduced to mere grazing land for livestock.

Wikimedia Commons – Snowmanradio



The Night the Small Town of Kenilworth Became Part of the Frontline

By George Marshall, second-year History student

During the Second World War, the town of Kenilworth was largely regarded as a safe haven for those fleeing danger – away from the nearby industrial cities of Coventry and Birmingham, which endured heavy bombing raids. Kenilworth's surrounding pastures and historic charm made it an ideal location for evacuating children, and consequently, the town's evacuee population was among the highest in the region.

Nevertheless, the early hours of 21 November 1940 brought the quiet town to the frontlines of the conflict, challenging that long-held perception.

On the evening of 20 November – the day of the first mass burial of victims from the deadly raids on Coventry – more than seventy people seeking shelter from Coventry gathered at The Globe Hotel on Abbey End.

At around 2 a.m., while many in the hotel were preparing to settle for the night or seeking refuge in nearby houses, an aircraft was heard overhead, travelling northwest towards Coventry. Seconds later, a loud explosion shattered the silence: a landmine had been dropped in a field at the junction of Oaks Road and Beauchamp Road. The damage from this initial blast was substantial, but fortunately not fatal. Windows in nearby streets were blown out, and a large crater was left in the field, but no injuries were reported.

Moments later, a second explosion shook Kenilworth – an event that would leave a lasting scar on the town's collective memory.

The centre of this second detonation was directly atop numbers 3 and 5 Abbey End – the site of Smith and Millar, a draper's shop. Nearby buildings were completely destroyed, and parts of The Globe Hotel suffered damage, just hours after sheltering many evacuees. Local historian Robin Leach estimates that up to thirty people stayed at the hotel that night. Thankfully, despite the damage to the north side of the building, all but three guests survived.



While the physical destruction was immense, the greatest impact was the tragic loss of life. Twenty-six people were killed in the blast, sixteen of whom were from Coventry. At Smith and Millar, eight people perished – including the proprietress Isabella Smith, residents Nellie and George Webb, and guests from Coventry: Mr and Mrs Glennie, Mr and Mrs Snape, and their nephew. Similar tragedies unfolded in surrounding buildings.

In addition to the fatalities, over seventy civilians were treated at the medical centre set up in St John's Church Hall, established early in the war. Many received care from local GPs for minor injuries, while the mental health impacts became increasingly apparent in the hours following the blast. To accommodate the large number of deceased, Kenilworth's cemetery chapel was converted into a mortuary, where victims lay on the floor in the days that followed, awaiting identification.

In the aftermath, the destruction was cleared by local firemen, Civil Defence teams, various organisations, and volunteers – many of whom had been working in Coventry just hours before.

Though the explosion was clearly not intended for Kenilworth, the events of 21 November 1940 and the days that followed revealed the town's resilience, unity, and close ties to Coventry, as well as its vulnerability during wartime. These events have left a profound mark on Kenilworth's history in the decades since.

Today, a plaque commemorates the sacrifice and tragedy endured by the town nearly 85 years ago.

Warwick Road bomb damage, Kenilworth, 1940s © Warwickshire County Record Office, via Our Warwickshire

Bosworth: Unravelling the Myths of a Defining Battle

By Mikołaj Śmigielski, third-year History student

The Battle of Bosworth in 1485 is often remembered as a defining moment in English history, representing a climactic clash between good and evil. It is the moment the deformed tyrant Richard III was slain while the noble saviour, Henry Tudor, was crowned king — ending the Wars of the Roses and marking the start of the Tudor dynasty. However, popular beliefs surrounding the battle are rooted less in historical reality and more in myth: dramatised storytelling carefully constructed to serve political agendas. A closer examination of Bosworth reveals a more complex, less flattering story — a complicated political event defined by opportunism, shifting loyalties, and strategy.

Richard III: A Tyrant and Usurper?

One of the most enduring myths surrounding Bosworth is that Richard III was an evil usurper — a disfigured leader who stole the throne and deserved his fate. Thanks to Shakespeare's depiction of Richard as a hunchbacked villain, this narrative has persisted for centuries. In *Richard III*, he is portrayed as an embodiment of wickedness and thirst for power, his twisted physical appearance reflecting his moral corruption.

In reality, this portrayal was largely a product of Tudor propaganda. Richard did suffer from scoliosis, as confirmed by the University of Leicester's forensic analysis of his skeleton, but it would not have made him incapable nor grotesquely deformed. His physical condition was exaggerated and weaponised to undermine his character. As Jeffrey R. Wilson argues, the

myth of Richard's body was part of a larger Tudor project to associate physical difference with moral evil, making him the scapegoat for decades of civil war.

Furthermore, Richard was not merely a usurper. He was named Lord Protector after Edward IV's death and then crowned king under a legal pretext that questioned the legitimacy of Edward's children. He maintained support from key regions, especially the North. Much of his alleged villainy comes from Tudor sources written after his death — including those penned under Elizabeth I's rule — and were never intended to be neutral. Reassessing Richard means recognising how history can be distorted by those in power.

Henry Tudor: A Heroic Liberator?

Just as Richard has been vilified, Henry VII has been glorified. According to legend, Henry was a noble liberator, returning from exile to save England from tyranny. His victory is framed as moral and just — a divine intervention to correct Richard's wicked rule.

This narrative was carefully crafted to legitimise Henry's questionable claim. His right to the throne came through his mother, Margaret Beaufort, whose Beaufort line descended from John of Gaunt's illegitimate children (later legitimised by law). In addition, Henry had grown up away from England in Brittany and Burgundy, largely disconnected from the politics of the land he would later rule. Ultimately, he was an outsider leading a foreign-supported force.

Henry may have liberated England from Richard III's rule, but his own reign was marked by suspicion, tight control, and political consolidation. He governed through bonds, fines, and surveillance. The idealisation of Henry as a divinely appointed ruler does not reflect the caution and suspicion that actually characterised his reign.

Richard III's Crown Found in a Bush?

Perhaps the most famous tale from the Battle of Bosworth is that Richard's crown was found in a thorn bush after the fighting ended and was placed on Henry's head. This conveniently symbolic legend suggests that nature itself had chosen the new king — giving the battle a sacred and providential quality.



Wikimedia Commons – James William Edmund Doyle

Yet, there is no contemporary evidence for this story. It likely originated later as Tudor propaganda, designed to portray Henry's rule as divinely ordained. It helped transform the messy reality of a civil war regime change into something glorious and destined. This imagery is politically powerful — not only reinforcing Tudor legitimacy but also recasting the violence into a spiritual triumph.

In truth, Henry's legitimacy came not from divine intervention, but from his marriage to Elizabeth of York, uniting the rival houses of York and Lancaster. The crown-in-the-bush tale is a powerful example of how myths are used to justify political transitions.

A Fair Fight Between Two Kings?

Another common depiction of the battle is that it was a fair and even contest — a noble conflict between two rival kings with clear loyalties.

In fact, many English nobles, such as the powerful Stanley family, refused to commit to either side until the outcome seemed clear. Henry Tudor was not widely recognised; he was a claimant with a flimsy title and a foreign army. When the Stanleys did act, it was at the critical moment — siding with Henry and tipping the battle decisively in his favour.

This was not a chivalric showdown but a piece of political theatre, with key players choosing power over loyalty.

Richard III's Glorious Death in Combat?

A popular image of Richard III's death is that of a brave king refusing to flee the battlefield — crying out for a horse and dying a noble death. But forensic evidence tells a very different story.

Analysis by the University of Leicester reveals that Richard's body bore multiple wounds, mostly to the skull, some likely inflicted after death. He had no helmet, was likely unhorsed, and was surrounded and overwhelmed. His final moments were brutal, undignified, and chaotic — not a heroic last stand, but a mob killing.

The romanticisation of Richard's death sanitises the brutal reality of medieval warfare. The myth of the noble warrior king distracts from the political nature of his defeat: this was not about honour on the battlefield, but the elimination of a rival.

The Battle Ended the Wars of the Roses?

While Bosworth certainly marked a turning point, its depiction as the definitive end of the Wars of the Roses is misleading.

Dynastic instability continued after 1485. In 1487, the Battle of Stoke Field saw Henry fighting Yorkist rebels supporting Lambert Simnel, a pretender claiming to be the Earl of Warwick. This was a major military threat and arguably more significant in securing Henry's throne than Bosworth itself.

The wars did not end decisively at Bosworth but faded over years of cautious rule, marriage alliances, and suppression of dissent. Presenting Bosworth as a clean conclusion simplifies the prolonged chaos that followed.

Why These Myths Persist

Why have these myths endured for over 500 years? The answer lies in power, propaganda, and education. The Tudors controlled the narrative of their own history. With chroniclers and playwrights like Shakespeare working under Tudor monarchs, history was shaped to legitimise the new dynasty. Richard III had to be vilified so that Henry VII could be glorified.

At the same time, the lack of widespread literacy and forensic evidence meant few could challenge the official version. Over time, these stories were absorbed into national consciousness — reinforced by drama, literature, and schools. The simplicity of a good versus evil narrative appeals to our moral instincts, making it more likely to endure.

Reclaiming the Truth

Re-examining the Battle of Bosworth and its myths does not diminish its importance — it emphasises it. Understanding that the battle was decided by betrayal and politics rather than honour, that Richard III was more than a villain, and that the war didn't end neatly in 1485 allows us to appreciate the complexity of the event.

Bosworth represents not only the beginning of a new royal house but also the power of storytelling. Investigating these myths enables us to challenge political narratives and uncover the messier, more human truths beneath them.

After all, history is rarely black and white.

The Battle of Edgehill: The First Clash of the English Civil War

By Noah Parsons, third-year History student

1642 marked the volatile split between King and Parliament. Only war would decide the victor. England became staunchly divided along tribal loyalties, and Warwickshire was no exception. It was in this county that the first battle of what became known as the English Civil War took place: Edgehill.

Drawing up battle lines near Kineton, both forces – each around 14,000 strong – were eager for battle. King Charles I, largely a nominal figurehead, delegated command to the Earl of Forth and his dashing nephew, Prince Rupert of the Rhine. Having gloriously served in the armies of continental Europe, Rupert was already a veteran at 23 years old and had total control over the Royalist cavalry. Opposing them, Parliament had assigned the Earl of Essex to command the Parliamentary host. Despite a plethora of military experience, Essex had gained a reputation as a ‘slow, indecisive, and poor strategist.’

On 23 October, fighting commenced in the afternoon with a mostly ineffective artillery duel initiated by the Parliamentarians. However, it was the Royalists who first gained the advantage. In a daring assault, Prince Rupert and his right wing crashed into the cavalry of the Parliamentary left, utterly routing them. Meanwhile, Lord Wilmot’s cavalry achieved similar success on the Royalist left, again forcing their adversaries into flight. But rather than fall upon the exposed Parliamentary centre to ensure total victory, both Royalist cavalry wings pursued the fleeing foe off the battlefield in a disorderly manner. This decision would prove costly.

Both centres, comprising musketeers and pikemen, engaged in a bloody standoff. Musketeers exchanged devastating volleys before the pikemen met for a ‘push of pike,’

shoving and stabbing amongst tight ranks. While the Royalists held superiority in cavalry, the Parliamentarians made up for it with their infantry. Better equipped than their Royalist counterparts, the Parliamentary infantry applied considerable pressure against the King’s forces.

Moreover, the absence of Royalist cavalry on the battlefield provided an invaluable opportunity for the Parliamentarians. Essex had two aces up his sleeve: cavalry regiments under the command of Sir William Balfour and Sir Philip Stapleton had been waiting in the Parliamentary reserve, completely unscathed from prior cavalry charges by Prince Rupert and Wilmot. Both Balfour’s and Stapleton’s regiments charged into exposed Royalist flanks.



Wikimedia Commons – Joseph Swain

Overwhelmed by superior Parliamentary infantry and surprise cavalry assaults, the Royalist infantry was heavily mauled during its prolonged engagement. It was only the return of some cavalry units that saved the Royalists from total rout, managing to stabilise the situation.

Sunset and darkness brought much-needed reprieve to the fighting. Both sides retired from battle with around 1,000 men dead. There was much confusion over which side had come out victorious. While the Royalist cavalry had annihilated their Parliamentary counterparts, their rash pursuit of already defeated adversaries snatched defeat from the jaws of victory. Meanwhile, the Parliamentary infantry had outclassed the Royalists in the centre but failed to land a killing blow. Even after the battle, neither side pursued the advantage, with both armies falling back to their home territories, their hunger for battle sated.

However, the battle was not over in some supernatural cases. In the following weeks and months, numerous local reports recounted spectral soldiers refighting the battle at Edgehill, with some of these ghosts identified as casualties. Perhaps this was merely an omen that the fighting of the English Civil War would continue for a decade, intensifying the level of bloodshed first seen at Edgehill.

Witchcraft of Warwickshire: Murder and Mystery

By Dawid Siedlecki, second-year Philosophy and Politics student

Historically, Warwickshire is no exception when it comes to witchcraft and 'magic'. Nor is it unique in the specific beliefs and taboos surrounding these subjects, ranging from the phantasmal black dogs said to haunt Meon Hill – a place already steeped in sinister reputation – to the widespread practice of witches using particular ingredients in potions for various purposes. However, where Warwickshire stands apart is in the witchcraft-related events that occurred long after the phenomenon's infamous peak.

Witchcraft trials and associated violence reached their zenith in the 16th and 17th centuries, marked by figures such as King James I, who enacted the Witchcraft Act of 1604 that allowed capital punishment for those found guilty, and the notorious witch-hunter Matthew Hopkins, whose victim count is estimated to exceed 200. Given this history, it is all the more bewildering that a case of witch-related violence should occur as late as 1875.

The supposedly enlightened Victorian society was shocked when 80-year-old Ann Tennant was brutally murdered with a pitchfork in the Long Compton area of Warwickshire. The assailant, James Haywood, justified his actions by accusing Tennant of being one of some twenty witches living locally who he claimed prevented him from tending his fields. Unlike earlier centuries, the Victorian justice system recognised Haywood's insanity and confined him to an asylum. Though Haywood was removed, his beliefs endured: in 1928, over fifty years later, one of an eyewitness's sons stated that, while he acknowledged Haywood's madness, he felt Haywood's suspicions were justified. He linked these suspicions to another local case, highlighting how such beliefs persisted across generations, particularly in small rural communities.

Spectral black dogs are not the only things to haunt Meon Hill. Its most infamous event occurred on Valentine's Day 1945, when Charles Walton, a 74-year-old farm labourer, was found murdered in the fields. A trouncing hook was embedded in his throat, and his body was pinned to the ground with his own pitchfork. As with Ann Tennant's murder, a pitchfork was the weapon, and a cross was reportedly carved into Walton's chest. Theories connecting the killing to witchcraft quickly surfaced. Walton was believed to be a 'cunning man' – a local folk magician – who allegedly 'blasted' (cursed) crops and livestock during the 1944 harvest. It was suggested that local villagers murdered him in retaliation, deliberately pinning his body so that his blood might "replenish the soil he had cursed". Whatever the true motive, it remains a mystery, as the murderer was never caught. The last major development in the case came in 1960, when a tin watch belonging to Walton was discovered in an outhouse on his property. The watch, thought to contain 'witch glass' – a talisman against witchcraft – had not been found during the original police search, raising more questions than answers nearly a century after the crime.

Warwickshire thus holds a unique place in history: its most infamous witchcraft-related events occurred centuries after such beliefs were expected to have died out. The cases of Ann Tennant and Charles Walton serve as haunting reminders to wider, especially urban, populations that the superstitions of the past can persist into the modern age.



Wikimedia Commons – Ian Paterson

Forging Industrial Modernity: Warwickshire and the British Industrial Revolution

*By Gabrielle Skinner-Ducharme,
third-year History student*

The Industrial Revolution reshaped Britain, transforming it from a rural economy into a hub of urban industry, driven by technological innovation and evolving patterns of production. By the late eighteenth century, the nation had become a preeminent commercial and industrial power.

A close look at Warwickshire, in the heart of the West Midlands, reveals how local industries actively shaped wider economic and social change. A localised lens reveals Warwickshire as a vital agent for British industrial modernity.

Rise of Coal and Mining Communities

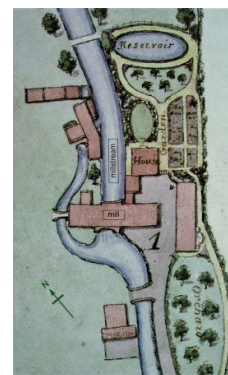
Though Warwickshire's coalfield had been worked since the thirteenth century, it remained modest in scale until steam power and new transport links – such as the Coventry Canal – unlocked its potential. As demand for coal surged in Britain's booming cities, Warwickshire's deep seams became goldmines. By 1903, the county's annual coal output had exceeded 3.4 million tons, fuelling furnaces and locomotives nationwide. Once quiet rural villages like Bedworth and Griff transformed into gritty industrial hubs. Pulsing with the rhythm of steam engines and the relentless chatter of pit wheels turning beneath smoky skies, Warwickshire helped forge the industrial backbone of modern Britain.

Baddesley Ensor, west of Atherstone, experienced both industrial growth and tragic loss. The 1882 mining explosion, which killed 23 men, sparked local debates about mine safety that echoed national conversations on industrial reform. Meanwhile, Piccadilly Village, built near Kingsbury's Colliery in the early twentieth century, reflected the paternalism of some companies. Purpose-built housing designed to attract and retain workers reshaped Warwickshire's physical and social landscape. These communities, although geographically modest, were deeply embedded in the industrial mechanisms of Britain.

Navigating the Textile Trade

Coventry emerged as a key cloth-producing centre in the seventeenth century, fostering a skilled labour force and a textile-focused economy. This early specialisation laid the groundwork for Warwickshire's later integration into industrial textile manufacturing. As the Industrial Revolution progressed, these skills were adapted to new technologies and markets.

Unusual for a region associated with wool and worsted, the Brandon Silk Mill – established in the nineteenth century – focused on the luxurious silk trade. This marked both diversification and an attempt to align with high-value markets in a competitive industrial landscape. Together, Coventry's early cloth traditions and later ventures into silk illustrate how Warwickshire's textile industry adapted to shifting national demands while building on a strong local legacy.



© Warwickshire County Record Office (CR 350-24)

Exploitation and Community Resistance in Warwickshire's Industry

Working conditions in Warwickshire's textile and mining industries reflected the broader exploitation in Britain: long hours, low pay, and unsafe environments. At Bedworth Worsted Mill, women and children made up much of the workforce, valued for their dexterity and readiness to accept low pay. Juvenile labourers often worked twelve-hour shifts under strict discipline, while women faced both economic dependency and harsh conditions.

Yet these hardships were met with resistance. Local communities engaged in early union activity, petitions, and collective protest, connecting Warwickshire's labour struggles to national movements for reform and factory legislation.

Local Forces, National Transformation

The microhistories of Warwickshire's industrial communities reveal a region deeply entangled in Britain's industrial evolution. Far from being a passive backdrop, Warwickshire was an active force in the making of modern Britain, where local decisions and lived experiences helped shape national transformation.

Unshackling the Bear: What Does It Mean, and Does It Matter?

By Harry Lane, third-year History student

This year, the University of Warwick rebranded. The iconic purple 'W' was out, replaced with a logo more closely resembling the University's coat of arms. In the bottom-right corner of both sits the bear and ragged staff – a familiar symbol of Warwickshire. Yet the new logo features a bold change: the bear has turned its back on the staff. Has the University bastardised this iconic emblem of the county, or merely updated it for the modern age? Here, I look back at the history of this

heraldic device to answer that question.

The bear and ragged staff have not long been associated with the county itself; rather, they were historically tied to the Earls of Warwick. They were first used in this context

by the Beauchamp family, most likely in the 14th century. Several examples can be found in the stunning Beauchamp Chapel at St Mary's Church, Warwick. At the foot of the tomb of Thomas Beauchamp (d. 1369) lies a bear, strongly suggesting that the animal was already linked to the family and the earldom. However, it was his son, Thomas Beauchamp II, who would synthesise the bear and the ragged staff. Records indicate that by 1387, his bedding was adorned with a silver staff and golden bear, and by 1397 the pair featured prominently on his great seal.

Although the Beauchamps ceased to hold the earldom after 1449, Richard Neville – the infamous 'Kingmaker' – ensured that the bear and ragged staff remained synonymous with Warwick. When he led his armies during the Wars of the Roses, their red livery was adorned with the silver staff, and he too used the symbols on his seal.

While we can trace when and how the bear and ragged staff came into use, it's impossible to determine precisely what they represent. In 1483, John Rous compiled the *Rous Roll* – a highly fictionalised history of England that sought to flatter Warwick's rulers. He claimed the bear had been passed down from Arthgallus, a knight of the legendary King Arthur. According to Rous, another ancient lord named Gwayr had been attacked by a giant wielding an uprooted tree; after slaying the beast, Gwayr seized the 'ragged staff'. In the 1650s, William Dugdale similarly claimed that an earl named Morvidus had killed a giant with a broken tree branch, and he echoed Rous' links between Arthgallus and the bear. Allegedly, Arthgallus believed his name was derived from *artos*, the Welsh word for bear, and so adopted the creature as his symbol.

These stories are, of course, mythical – but in the medieval period, such legends were taken seriously. As historian Emma Mason has argued, the Beauchamps' attempts to legitimise their heraldry were almost certainly political. The Earldom of Warwick was created in 1088, and the Beauchamps only acquired it in 1268. By linking their devices to ancient British lore, they reinforced their claim to the title and embedded themselves within the national historical canon.

Over the last two centuries, however, the bear and ragged staff have come to represent Warwickshire itself. In the 19th century, local regiments and the constabulary adopted the symbol. More significantly, in 1907, Warwickshire County Council secured exclusive rights to the pair – which is why, even today, most variations differ subtly from the official design. In 2016, Warwickshire finally adopted an official flag: a white bear and ragged staff on a red field. However, at the insistence of the council, the flag had to diverge from the old baronial arms. As a result, the bear was 'unshackled', with the chains binding it to the staff removed. Still, the iconic pair remained side by side.

So, do the University's alterations truly matter? In short: not massively. But ever since the Beauchamps first used them, the bear and ragged staff have symbolised continuity – a thread between Warwickshire's past and present. The University may have turned the bear away to look to the future. But in doing so, it may also have turned its back on something we value just as much: the past.

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rewind.