

# An Introduction

Coventry and its surrounding area has a long and rich history. There is much to learn about how the settlement started and how its population grew due to an increase in various industries, in particular cloth making. In this study, children will gain an understanding of how Coventry became the place we know and love today.

## What you need to know

For a long time in early history, the only knowledge of settlements in Coventry dates back to the existence of a Roman Fort, known as Lunt Fort. This fort was built by the Romans during the rebellion of Boudicca. There is also evidence of Saxon settlements in the area known as 'The Forest of Arden'. The Saxons would have chosen this site due its farming capabilities, with a river running straight through the site where the city of Coventry sits today.

Coventry's history truly flourished with the introduction of the Earl Leofric, and his wife, Godiva. Rich and powerful, they built a new monastery/priory in the area, after the Vikings destroyed the original founded by St Osburga. This brought a great deal of wealth to those living near the priory. Thus, the seeds for the development of the town of Coventry were sown.

Soon after this, a Bishop moved to the town, further highlighting how important the area was to become. A motte and bailey castle was built in the central part of the town. The town was run by two sides – the priors and the earls. Infighting caused tension in the town, and eventually the King sent his men to Coventry to retake the castle.

In the 16th century, King Henry VIII ordered the dissolution of all monasteries in the country. Unfortunately, this led to the priory and cathedral founded by Leofric, being destroyed. Through the early centuries, the loss of two iconic landmarks didn't hinder the town's growth, as the rising number of trades in the town meant that it became, and stayed, a popular destination to live and work. A medieval guild hall was built for the tradesman to use, and the town was frequently visited by royalty. By the 1300's the town finally became recognised as a city.

Throughout its history, Coventry has been home to skilled workers who have adapted their abilities to succeed in a variety of industries. Coventry first became known for its weavers, but it was the dyers with their famous Coventry blue cloth that really put Coventry on the map. When this industry finally declined, Huguenots – refugees from France – brought the skills of silk-weaving to the city and the industry enjoyed a long period of success. Later, the city became known for its watch and



clock makers and their skills lent themselves to making sewing machines which became an important part of Coventry's development. Many sewing machine companies turned their hand to making bicycles, which in turn led to motorised bicycles, and eventually, cars.

During World War 2, Coventry's industrial expertise was put to good use producing munitions and aeroplane parts. Many of the automobile manufacturers had shadow factories on their sites which supported the war effort. Unfortunately, this made Coventry a target for the Luftwaffe and the city suffered some of the worst bombing raids in England during the war. The Coventry Blitz led to the destruction of many important buildings and the loss of many lives.

Following the devastation of the war, Coventry needed a complete renovation. Whilst this was already in the planning, the destruction of most of the city meant that plans could be expanded upon and enhanced. An architect named Donald Gibson shared his plans and, after a few alterations, the work began.

The area of Broadgate was transformed into a large, open air shopping destination and the lower precinct was created. Most important of all, was the rebuilding of the Cathedral. The old bombed out cathedral would be left as a reminder of the fighting spirit and sacrifices of war. The new cathedral would be grand and a symbol of hope for people all over the world.

## Resources

Our key enquiry questions, sources, PowerPoints, activities, and other resources will help to build children's understanding of their local area of Coventry and answer the question 'How has Coventry changed over time?'

## Get in touch

Is there an area of local history you'd love to see on our Local History Hub?

Get in touch to learn how we can work together! Email

[LocalHistory@tpet.co.uk](mailto:LocalHistory@tpet.co.uk)  
to find out more.



Teacher's Pet



Historic England



# Local History

Historic England and Teacher's Pet have come together to bring you a collection of free resources that you can use in your local history teaching.

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Historic England



Teacher's Pet

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## Who are Teacher's Pet?

Teacher's Pet have been providing downloadable and playable educational content to early years and primary school teachers for over 14 years. We cover all areas of the curriculum and use a team of in-house teachers and designers to create engaging and memorable concepts, that the children will love.

## Why local history?

At [Teacher's Pet](#) we want to empower primary school teachers by giving them the tools they need to deliver inspiring and thoughtful lessons about the local area and its history. We believe local history teaching has such an important part to play in a child's wellbeing – helping to give children a sense of pride in where they live.

Our Local History project is designed to provide teachers across the UK with everything they need to successfully carry out a full scheme of teaching about their local area, through key enquiry questions and source led activities.

Working with [Historic England](#) gives us access to archived maps and photos for resources and information from knowledgeable local historians, as well helping us to provide the content to you free of charge.

For more information about our Local History project or to find out more about Teacher's Pet Classroom Resources, please visit our website.