Unlike the many medieval towns which grew up at important river crossings, Coventry began as a small settlement by Anglo-Saxon tribes in a well-watered clearing in the Forest of Arden. It is known that by the tenth century a nunery had been founded on the banks of the River Sherbourne, and this was followed by Leofric and Godiva's endowment of the more famous Benedictine house in 1045. By their wealth, these foundations helped to provide the conditions in which the place could exploit its network of small streams to become a wool town and a centre of the cloth trade. The abbey's riches attracted the Bishop of Chester to move his see to Coventry in 1097–1102, introducing thereby an element of schism into the still small farming community. Taking advantage of the minority of the Earl of Chester, to whose family the place had belonged since about 1088, the Bishop (now titular abbot of his cathedral priory) appears to have established by forged charters the Priory's claim to the northern part of Coventry as of Leofric's gift.1 This division of the town into 'Earl's Half' and 'Prior's Half' was the source of continuous strife which manifested itself in the attempts of each 'half' to outstrip the privileges and prosperity enjoyed by the other. By the fourteenth century, possibly even as a result of this rivalry, the town had reached its peak, and only London, Bristol and York could be said to exceed it in population and wealth.

The Earl of Chester's charter of 1214–13,4 in which he granted his burgesses the same laws and privileges as the citizens of Lincoln enjoyed, was the first of a series ofsequential and royal charters which ensured the development of a self-governing community. The Earl's manor of Coventry, originally extending into the surrounding parishes and hamlets, was truncated of some of its northern portions by the forged charters and was further endangered in the thirteenth century by the waning Chester fortunes. The remnant of the manor, however, descended in 1227 to Queen Isabel whose powerful advocacy resuscitated it and obtained for her tenants in 1345 the crowning privilege of a commuter. It was not until the eighteenth century that the malaise which destroyed the city's main industry lifted, and silk-weaving and watch-making revived the prosperity of earlier days.3

Thereafter a period of economic decline, not reversed until the eighteenth century, set in. The Mayor, the Court Leet and the new Council made every effort to save the cloth trade and at least to preserve the reputation of 'Coventry blue' cloth, but their measures, essentially as restrictive as the crafts' own rules, may even have contributed to the decline. While adding to the distress in the city and the decay of its buildings, the dissolution of the monasteries and of the guilds and chantries brought extensive properties into the hands of the closed Corporation and, with them, the control of moneys it was not yet ready to handle. By reason of its central position in the country on the route between London and the north west, Coventry could not but become involved in the affairs of the kingdom. The civil war of Stephen's reign brought the Earl of Chester and Robert Marmion II and, later, the King himself to battle in the centre of the town. Simon de Montfort's forces were beleaguered in nearby Kenilworth Castle in 1266, but the Dictum of Kenilworth was, in fact, announced at the ecclesiastical council in Coventry. Coventry was also a convenient place for Edward II to assemble his forces in 1322 against the Earl of Lancaster and at the end of the century Gosford Green, at the eastern extremity of the town, was the spot chosen for the abortive duel between the Dukes of Hereford and Norfolk. Lollardy made some progress in the city which is said to have become a centre for the distribution of Lollard books. Two parliaments met in Coventry: the 'Unlearned Parliament' of 1404 and the Lancastrian 'Diabolical Parliament' of 1459. Royal visits took place from time to time and, by virtue of the Black Prince's close association as lord of the manor, the city's coat of arms bears the legend Camera Principis. A century later the Lancastrian queen, Margaret of Anjou, by her frequent use of the city for her schemes against the Yorkists, won for it the title 'The Queen's secret harbour', although to maintain its mercantile interests and to get its charters confirmed the city was prepared to entertain both parties and contrived to remain in favour with the reigning house. In the Civil War of the seventeenth century the city stood for the Parliament and closed its gates to the King. At the Restoration the ministers of the two parish churches were ejected or resigned but later returned to the city to lead strong dissenting congregations: Presbyterian and Unitarian influences can be seen in the closed Corporation, whose composition and actions were determined by religion and politics. The Corporation's handling of the charity funds entrusted to its care after the Dissolution was censured by a decree in Chancery which sequestrated the city's estates. It was not until the eighteenth century that the malaise which destroyed the city's main industry lifted, and silk-weaving and watch-making revived the prosperity of earlier days.3

Coventry's rise to its position of importance among English towns owed a great deal to its situation almost in the centre of England and Wales. The surrounding county, Warwickshire, comprises three distinct

1 For this interpretation of the evidence see Lancaster (1), (2) 37-8, (3) 1-2, and below pp. 3-4. Prof. R. H. C. Davis, in his 'An unknown Coventry charter' (EHR lxxxvi (1931), 333-43), puts forward a different view taking into account recent work on the Westminster forgeries, but inspired mainly by a newly discovered charter which, although the seal is forged, he accepts as genuine. He dates this charter, by which the Earl of Chester grants Coventry to Robert Marmion (?rr I, d. C.1190), to 1145-6.
2 The date of this charter could now be as early as 1140 (see A. L. Poole's introduction to Gesta Stephani (1955), xvi-xxii). If Prof. Davis's charter (see above) is genuine and his interpretation of it correct, then Ranulf's charter to the burgesses of Coventry (if it was granted before 1140 and 1145-6) would have benefited the whole town. But Henry II's confirmation (1182) and Ranulf III's follow-up charter show no hint of a change in the composition or status of the burgesses.
3 M. D. Harris, The Story of Coventry (1912), 59-60, 96-117; F. M. Powicke, King Henry III and the Lord Edward (1947), 133-5; M. McKean, The 14th Century (1930), 65, 487; E. F. Jacob, The 15th Century (1950), 51, 113, 216, 342, 547-9; VCCH, ii, 30-2; Last Bk, passim; and see below passim.
geographical areas, stretching across the county from the south-west in a north-easterly direction: the rich agricultural Feldon country in the south-east; the river valleys of the upper Avon and its tributaries; and the former Forest of Arden (the Tame-Blythe basin) to the north, with the small and infertile East Warwickshire plateau. Coventry is in the Forest area, just within its south-east fringe, and has low ranges of hills to the north-east and north-west, but to the south-west the countryside slopes gradually to the fertile valleys of the Sowe and the Avon. The town early became the hub of a remarkable road system which gave its people access to the surrounding parishes and hamlets of the manor and the city's own county, and thence to Chester and London, and Southampton, Bristol and Boston, the ports through which its merchants imported food and raw materials and exported wool and finished cloth. The 'Welsh' road to the north-west may first have been used to bring coal from the Neolithic axe 'factory' at Craig Lwyd (Pennaenmawr), and the north-south route probably dates from the late Stone Age when Neolithic implements of Nuneaton Campionate were brought to the Coventry area. The main Roman roads, the Fosse Way, Watling Street and Ryknild Street, formed a triangle round the site of the later Saxon settlement, and no archaeological evidence for subsidiary Roman roads in the Coventry area has yet been found. Nevertheless the lie of the land, the Stone Age routes, the presence at Baginton (four miles to the south) of both civil and military occupation by the Romans, the known routes of the Angles and Saxons into the area from the Fens and from Oxfordshire, and the later road structure suggest that there were at least 'ways' across Dunsmore Heath or from Marton and Frankton, while from the south, ways may have passed through the site northwards to the Nuneaton area and Mancetter. By the twelfth century there is documentary evidence of exits to the east, the south-east (towards London), the north-west and the west, and by the thirteenth century, of further roads, including one thrusting north-eastwards through Foleshill in a straight line to cross the Sowe at Longford, and another branching from the Warwick road towards Baginton. Bridges were now replacing fords. By about 1260 the evidence for the Coventry road system is more or less complete, showing direct communication with, for example, Nuneaton, Leicester, Northampton, Chester and Worcester, and with the distant ports on the east, the west and south coasts. Most of the exits were turnpiked during the eighteenth century. It was not until the age of canal building that the town found a substitute for the navigable rivers it had always lacked: the need for cheap transport to bring coal from the north-Warwickshire coalfield provided the impetus, and in 1768 work began on the first section of the Coventry Canal. Links with other Midland canals brought it into communication with the Grand Trunk, the Grand Union and the Grand Junction Canals, and provided uninterrupted water communication with, among other places, London, Oxford, Manchester and Liverpool.

EARLY SETTLEMENT AND SAXON COVENTRY

Early archaeological evidence for inner Coventry is peculiarly sparse, although it must be admitted that there has been little systematic excavation of the area. Although trade routes probably linked the district with the Nuneaton area and with North Wales during the Neolithic period, no evidence of pre-Roman settlement has been found other than the Bronze Age sites at Ryton-on-Dunsmore and Baginton, and the Iron Age sites at Ryton, Wappenbury and Corley. Baginton, however, with its fairly continuous occupation from the Bronze Age until at least the seventh century, and its Roman fort, is thought to have been the main centre of occupation in the area until the foundation of the nunnery on the banks of the Sherbourne encouraged a shift of population and trade to Coventry. Philological evidence, on the other hand, suggests intense activity by groups of invading Angles and Saxons who, probably during the great period of the English kingdom under Penda and his successors, made clearings in the forest, ploughed virgin land and formed settled communities in and around Coventry. It is not yet possible to prove where and when the first Coventry community settled, but there is little doubt that an early community chose to establish itself on the hill overlooking the Sherbourne which became the centre of the later town. This site, mainly south of a carboniferous band of coal measure in the south-east Arden country, extends across the region's three geological bands of Triassic Keuper Red Marls, which are in turn broken by areas of Permian Brecchia and sandstone. From the time of Domesday the settlement's centre was on a slight eminence, the ground falling away gently on all sides except to the north, where there is a fairly deep declivity. One possible interpretation of the Anglo-Saxon word Coventry – a wooded wetary area by a hill – precisely describes the site through which the River Sherbourne meandered from west to east, receiving the Radford Brook and the Endemere from the north, and opening out into marshy land such as Bablake and the 'mora', between converging streams. As part of English Mercia, although close to the border of the Dane-law, Coventry came within the ambit of the old Mercian culture and of the Celtic tradition of the Mercian church with its bishopric at Lichfield. To this tradition probably belonged St Osburg's nunnery, a fragment of a sculptured stone cross-shaft, and the church of St Nicholas, said to have been founded c.1003. According to Rous, when Edric Streona harried Warwickshire in his advance southwards with Cnut's forces in 1016, he sacked the nunnery at Coventry and martyred St Osburg its abbess. To this tradition probably belonged St Osburg's nunnery, a fragment of a sculptured stone cross-shaft, and the church of St Nicholas, said to have been founded c.1003. According to Rous, when Edric Streona harried Warwickshire in his advance southwards with Cnut's forces in 1016, he sacked the nunnery at Coventry and martyred St Osburg its abbess. Rous's statement is borne out by the handful of archaeological finds of 

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5 PCNHS ii, no. 12 (1952), 165; no. 9 (1958), 184-92, 116; no. 5 (1949), 76-81; no. 6 (1950), 177-9. W. M. Elliot of the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, states that the number of Neolithic stone implements of Nuneaton Campionate from the area 'suggests a trade or communication route'.
6 See map 1; R. G. Collingwood and J. L. Myres, Roman Britain and the English Settlements (2nd edn 1945), 248-9 and map vii. For a description of the Roman fort see R. B. Hobley in T. A. S. Birtwell (ed.), 65-129. A Roman coin and an alleged Roman pavement uncovered in Broadgate [Cov. Mag. 1759, ii, 285], a Roman coin recovered from Cox Street [Cov. Mag. 187t, 1], and stray finds of both coins and pottery of Roman date in the city (cf. C. M. Elliott, and D. and P. Watson) do not constitute evidence for Roman occupation of the site, but could there have been a site there? There is stronger evidence for a Roman presence at Foleshill [Cov. Mag. 1759, i, 81, 265-7; Peter Hall by C. A. Abbe! (Proc. Soc. Ant. and Scot. ii (1879), 121-4); Ryton, Whitley and Heathall Common (C. M. Elliott) and of course Baginton, all lying within 5 miles of the centre of Coventry and more or less encircling it. See also 3 CLI, 244-9 for a list of Roman finds in the shire, and PCNHS i, no. 1 (1903), 55-60, no. 5 (1911), 146-9; ii, no. 8 (1954), 251.
7 CLI deeds; G H deeds; The Gough Map, ed. E. J. S. Passmore as The Map of Britain (1958); and see also Lancaster, l, 7-8, 116; VCH viii, 34; Watts, 55, 61-4, 74-5, 81-2, 88, 93, 99, 117, 122.
COVENTRY

Anglo-Saxon and Viking origin, by place- and personal-name evidence, and by the honour paid locally to St Osburg. 12

That Leofric, a royal favourite and successor to a part of Edric Streona's Earldom of Mercia, was known by 1024 to have a personal interest in Coventry, is shown by Archbishop Ethelnoth's gift to him of a relic from Rome which he intended to be kept there. By 1024 Leofric was Earl of Mercia and by 1025 had married Godgifu (Godiva) who held in her own right or by her husband's gift large estates in Mercia, including Coventry itself. The marriage had a decisive influence on the history of the place, for in 1045 the Earl and his wife founded in the centre of Coventry, very possibly on the site of the destroyed nunnery, a Benedictine abbey which they richly endowed. No trace of their abbey church has been found but, taking into consideration the known liberality of the founders, their special concern for Coventry and the greed with which this wealthy foundation inspired the Bishop of Chester before the century was out, it is likely that they built in Coventry at least as splendid a church as the great stone edifice they put up at Stow St Mary near Lincoln twelve years later. Their church possibly consisted of a nave and chancel; it had two enclosed aisles (porticus) probably north and south of the nave, a sumptuous shrine for the remains of St Osburg and a reliquary for the relic Ethelnoth had sent Leofric. The domestic buildings of the abbey may have lain, like those of its successor priory, to the north of the church on land sloping down to the Sherbourne. Although it owned more distant properties, the abbey held in Coventry no more than its own precinct and, in the neighbourhood, some seven hides in Coundon, Sowe and Binley. There is reason to believe that Leofric and Godiva occasionally stayed in Coventry even before the Archbishop of Canterbury dedicated their monastery in 1045, and the evidence strongly suggests that they both died in Coventry (Leofric in 1057, Godiva in 1069) and were buried there in the church of their own foundation, in the two portices. Godiva's power and influence in the place are illustrated by the story of the people's appeal to her to save them from the excessive taxes which her husband the Earl was levying on them. 13

Godiva's Coventry, according to the Domesday Survey, comprised five hides, possibly representing about 1000 acres, an area roughly equivalent to that included within the liberties of the city in a charter of 1199. It can therefore be assumed that the boundaries described in 1399 enclosed the area which had been known as Coventry from the eleventh century, extending from Spon Bridge on the west to Jabetsash at the boundary of Cheylesmore Park on the south (a distance of about seven-eighths of a mile). When the Domesday Survey was made the five hides, possibly representing about 1000 acres, an area roughly corresponding to the nave, a sumptuous shrine for the remains of St Osburg and a reliquary for the relic Ethelnoth had sent Leofric. The domestic buildings of the abbey may have lain, like those of its successor priory, to the north of the church on land sloping down to the Sherbourne. Although it owned more distant properties, the abbey held in Coventry no more than its own precinct and, in the neighbourhood, some seven hides in Coundon, Sowe and Binley. There is reason to believe that Leofric and Godiva occasionally stayed in Coventry even before the Archbishop of Canterbury dedicated their monastery in 1045, and the evidence strongly suggests that they both died in Coventry (Leofric in 1057, Godiva in 1069) and were buried there in the church of their own foundation, in the two portices. Godiva's power and influence in the place are illustrated by the story of the people's appeal to her to save them from the excessive taxes which her husband the Earl was levying on them. 13

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This division between the Prior's lands and the Earl's lands and between the Prior's men and the Earl's men profoundly affected the development of the city from the day Robert de Limesey established his case in the King's court. The effects were felt directly and with great immediacy until the breach was healed in the middle of the fourteenth century, and the division can be seen to have indirectly affected the city's subsequent history. The Earl's Half and the Prior's Half evolved as independent burghal communities. By the middle of the twelfth century the Earl's tenants were holding their tenements in free burgage – at a money rent, that is – and were enjoying the same laws and customs as those granted to the citizens of Lincoln. They had their own court (or portuaria) and the rare privilege of electing their own justice (justicia). The protection given to merchants coming to the town fostered trade, and an enlightened law which exempted newcomers from taxation for two years after they began to build in the town brought an increase in population and a period of rapid growth. 16

Since 1045 the monks had had the right to receive the profits of their court and to take tolls on goods sold within their estates. The forged charters, however, which brought the northern part of Coventry within their jurisdiction, also gave them the right to receive the fines on a long list of offences, some of which could have meant little in practice, and exemption from a long list of obligations. Robert de Limesey is not otherwise known as a founder of boroughs, and his one attempt in Coventry seems to have been peculiarly inept, for on his death the monks found it necessary to forge new charters whose main purpose was to exempt them from episcopal control and to restore observance of their rule. The Bishop was remembered, not as a benefactor, but as the oppressor of the monks and, indeed, during the twelfth century the monks had little real opportunity of exploiting their new lands or of expanding their sphere of economic enterprise. But this does not mean that they were inactive. On the contrary, the monks were always quick to take advantage of local circumstances, and it is clear that by the middle of the thirteenth century they were in a position from which they could make significant gains. 17

The medieval period has been divided into a number of different stages: the Early Middle Ages, the High Middle Ages, and the Late Middle Ages. This is a useful way of organizing the past, but it can also make it difficult to see the continuity of events. The Early Middle Ages is a period of change and transition, as societies move from a tribal to a feudal system. The High Middle Ages is a period of stability, as the feudal system becomes more firmly established. The Late Middle Ages is a period of decline, as the feudal system begins to break down. 18

12 Sir Frank Stenton has shown how the Mercian contribution to English learning in Alfred's time has been underestimated (Anglo-Saxon England, ed. edn 1971), 105, 170-2. For evidence on St Osburg and the nunnery see Bodl. MS Bulle 314, f. 16b; J. A. R. Hunin, Hist. Reg. Angl. ed. Hearne (1745), 104 and on the related 10th-century cross-shaft (which shows Celtic influence) see P. B. Chatwin in J.B. Bury, 64 and pl. xvi, fig. 1. For St Nicholas see J. Frendo, Some Borderlands, ed. Hearne (1722), 1148. For archaeological evidence see Med. Arch. xiv (1968), 21-2. Bigging (near Stoke) and Keresley are Scandinavian in origin (J. A. R. Hunin) and 12th- and 13th-century Corpes deeds contain many examples of Scandinavian personal names. For further details see Lancaster (i), 5-7. Recent discovery of Stamford ware at the lowest occupation level within the walls of the stone house near the River Avon suggests that the site was occupied as early as the 12th century. The sherds, however, were found amongst 12th-century cooking vessels (Ex inf. Mr Astill).

13 Lancaster (2), 13 and (3). See also Dom. Bk (1/VCH, 300). The suggested acreage of Godiva's Coventry is based on information from Prof. R. H. Kievi. For the boundary of 1399 see map 6.

14 See map 3. Lancaster (3) shows how the Bishop used forged charters to create the 'Bishop's Hall', later the Prior's Hall. For de Limesey's background, see Med. Arch. xiv (1968), 118.

15 Dibden, y. For the dating of the charter see note 1 above; and for borough tenure, J. Tait, The Medieval English Borough (1956), 96 sqq.
tending their influence. The civil war of Stephen's reign brought them no practical advantage, and towards the end of the century the Bishop expelled them and brought in seculars. 17

It seems, then, that economic growth came earlier and progress was more rapid in the Earl's Half where theburgesses were adopting an aggressive attitude towards their northern neighbours and had to be adjured by the Earl, when he defined the boundaries between the two 'halves', not to interfere in the Prior's market. 18

By the end of the twelfth century Coventry had already developed far beyond the small agricultural community which Leofric and Godiva had known. The exploitation of the town's natural resources was an important factor in this growth, for by the end of the century the streams watering both it and the surrounding district were supporting probably as many as thirteen mills, several of which (including Hill Mill) were undoubtedly fulling mills. 19 The wool and the cloth trades were by this time well established in the southern part of the town where all processes, from the import of the wool, through wool-combing, weaving, dyeing and fulling, to exporting the finished cloth or selling it and goods made from it in the local market, were being handled in the streets forming the town's east-west axis. In this same area were a number of carters who brought in the raw materials, provisions and other goods, and transported the finished goods from Coventry to markets elsewhere. Leather and metal workers already formed a significant proportion of the population, the tanners located on the outskirts of the town and the goldsmiths near the centre. The purveyors of food and drink were to be found in most parts of the town, and there were masons, carpenters and thatchers to build houses for the growing population. Besides the more numerous tradesmen of the Earl's Half, a small nucleus of merchants, weavers, dyers, leather and metal workers, a mason and sellers of food and drink, were concentrated in the Prior's Half, mainly in the north towards St Nicholas and in Well Street where the Prior held his market. 20

The main features of the town were already present by the twelfth century. In the Prior's Half, the cathedral priory and Holy Trinity Church on the central eminence, with St Nicholas on rising ground to the north, were the main landmarks. In the low-lying area between, the Sherbourne and the Radford Brook, flowing on parallel courses until near their confluence at St Osbald's Pool, made this part of the town especially marshy and difficult for building, thus creating three separate communities—one clustered round the great gate of the priory; the second a suburb centred on St Nicholas; the third concentrated round the well and the market in Well Street. At the bottom of Bishop Street, just north of the double river-crossing, lay the recently founded Hospital of St John. 21

In the Earl's Half, the main landmarks were the castle and St Michael's church situated just south of the cathedral church and Holy Trinity; the three churches within a stone's throw of one another and seeming to lie within one churchyard, though divided by the boundary which the Earl's charter defined. The castle may have had a mound with a stone keep. It was surrounded by a ditch and a stone wall with turrets; its main gate was at the north-western corner and the castle bakehouse with a common oven were on the northern side. After King Stephen had occupied it and had put the Earl to flight, the castle must have been restored again, but then fell into disuse. (John Stow writing after 1579 described it as the 'fortelet or pile standing in the earles streite, where the earles of Chester did make theyre abode which they afterwards decayed and turned into tenements.') Streets of houses grew up across it from west to east, and running south towards the Earl's park. 22 This was the area of greatest wealth where the wool and cloth merchants and the long-distance carriers were active. Early suburbs developed east and west of the town, partly because the dyers and tanners of the Earl's Half needed to work near running water which was available in the southern part of the town only on the periphery. New areas of habitation therefore grew up on the main roads out of the town where they forded the rivers, on the east at Gosford and on the west at Spon near the new leper hospital of St Leonard, probably built between 1177 and 1181. 23

The outlying districts of the Prior's Half comprised parts of Radford, Coundon, Whitmore and Hamall, but excluded Willenhall (a detached portion of Holy Trinity parish) to the south-east. The Priory also held part of Sowe to the north-east. These were all wooded areas, those in the north lying in the forests of Barnet and Hasilwood, and the only signs of development by the twelfth century are in Hamall, Coundon, and Sowe where there was a certain amount of land under the plough, and in Willenhall where there was pasture land and a chapel belonging to the Priory. The Chester lands were, on the other hand, a great deal more extensive, lying mainly to the south but probably also including wide lands on the north-east. Already there were fourteen chapels dependent upon St Michael's serving these areas, but little else to show how the communities in them were developing, although there were at least roads to connect them with the town. 24

THE THIRTEENTH-CENTURY CITY

Now that the town was firmly divided into two 'halves' and the interests of both overlords had for a century extended to the hamlets encircling it, the rift might well have been permanent. Yet during the thirteenth century unifying forces were at work. By the middle of the century the manor of Coventry had descended from Earl Ranulf (d.1212) to his niece Cecily, wife of Roger of Mold. The Molds sometimes stayed in the manor-house (now known as Cheylesmore) for hunting in the park. Here they were close neighbours of the Greyfriars to whom the Earl had given in about 1250 a portion of the park. When Roger decided to go on crusade in 1210, he and his wife granted to the Priory in fee land valued at £60 a year in the manor of Coventry. Apart from the fact that they specifically excluded the manor-house and park, the Greyfriars' house and its precinct, certain rights, and the homage and service of their mesne tenants, there is no way of telling which parts of the manor they granted away. Nevertheless the Prior did homage and paid an annual rent of £10 to the Molds who thus remained lords of the manor with the Prior as their mesne tenant. There is room for doubt as to what the Molds actually intended, and the discrepancies lords of the manor with the Prior as their mesne tenant. 25

17 Lancaster (3), passim; VCH ii, 12-1; and for the expulsion of the monks see Matt. Paris, Chron. Majora (RS), ii, 380.
18 See map 1; Cal. Chart. 1141-69, 116; for the later boundary between St Michael's and Holy Trinity parishes, St Michael's in 1675 (Poolc, 171-4, from B M Harl. MS 5839, f. 167) and Holy Trinity in 1811 (Poolc, 206-8).
19 Corp. deeds; G-H deeds; B M Harl. MS 7, passim; Cal. Chart. 1141-69, 116.
20 See Cal. Chart. 1141-69, 116; Cat. Anc. Deeds, 97-8; Watts, passim, for map 6.
21 Lancaster (3), 190-1, and see map 6.
22 Lancaster (3), passim; and for the 14 chapels see Cal. Chart. 1141-69, 116.
23 Watts, passim, for map 6.
24 Watts, passim, and for the 14 chapels see Cal. Chart. 1141-69, 116.
25 Watts, passim, and for the 14 chapels see Cal. Chart. 1141-69, 116.
the difficulties in reaching a conclusion, as they did during the succeeding century in Coventry. 29

The grant of 1250 could have had the effect of re-uniting the two 'halves'. In practice it did nothing to improve the situation. In the hamlets it confirmed the feudal relationship between the overlords of the manor and their mesne tenants whose homage and service they retained, while doing nothing to bridge the differences between the Earl's estates and the Prior's estates. Within Coventry itself, although the grant would seem to have made the Prior the lord - even if only the mesne lord - of the whole town, in practice it did nothing of the kind, and the Earl's tenants and the Prior's tenants pursued their mutual feud with even greater bitterness.

About the turn of the century Ranulf III had confirmed his grandfather's charter to the burgesses with two significant modifications. In the first place, the burgesses' portmanes was now the proper court in which the burgesses might sue, and the Earl's constables were specifically forbidden to take them to the castle to plead. Secondly, to allow a period for adjustment after the rapid growth of the last half-century, the indenture to newcomers to the town to settle there was removed. The Earl was as it were pulling out of Coventry and leaving the now well-developed town community, with its justices, its reeve (later called bailiff) and its chamberlain, to run its own affairs. 24

The monks, newly restored to the cathedral priory, attempted during the thirteenth century to consolidate their position both in the Prior's Half and in the town at large. In this they were encouraged by the break-up of the Chester earldom; the Molds' grant of 1250 may be seen as forwarding their plan to gain supremacy in the town. In two charters they obtained royal confirmation of almost the whole range of their forfeited charters, and on the second occasion (in 1267), when the monastery was in debt, they acquired the much sought-after privilege of a guild merchant as well as the right to have their own coroners and freedom from distraint for debt throughout the kingdom. For the first time their charters, and on the second occasion (in 1267), when the monastery was in debt, they acquired the much sought-after privilege of a guild merchant as well as the right to have their own coroners and freedom from distraint for debt throughout the kingdom. For the first time their coroners and the guild merchant would serve the whole town, but the reactions of the Earl's tenants are sufficient evidence of the falseness of this view. Coventry merchants, as we have seen, were predominantly Earl's tenants, and it is almost certainly they who, after the Earl's Half had obtained confirmation of Ranulf's charter, obstructed the coroners now seen as the Prior's coroners, and the guild merchant now seen as the Prior's guild merchant. On the Prior's complaint the King ordered the sheriff of Warwick to intervene to protect his liberties, but some of the Earl's men imprisoned the sheriff's clerk, tramplers on the King's wits and rolls and assaulted the Prior's men. In 1280 the Prior still had a coroner, but no more is heard of his guild merchant. Moreover, although the Prior claimed the whole town and the suit of the burgesses of the southern 'half', the two 'halves' remained distinct, one held by the Prior directly from the Crown, the other with the Prior as mesne lord holding of the manors of Molds. During the latter half of the century, however, the Prior seems to have sufficiently recovered, in spite of failing in its bid for supremacy in the town, to complete the new nave of the cathedral church. 30

The wool and the cloth trades were now firmly established in the city, more particularly in the Earl's Half. Coventry merchants exported and imported wool, and they also exported the finished cloth for which Coventry was already famous. Those engaged in these trades, whether they were merchants, whether they were wool carders, combers or spinners, weavers, fullers or dyers, or whether they made woolen garments for local sale, may have formed as much as a quarter of the population, and followed their trade mainly in the Earl's Half. Almost without exception the merchants that have been identified were concentrated in a fairly small and obviously prosperous part of the city centering upon Earl Street. The craftsmen were still be found mainly across the east-west axis of the town from Gosford to Spon. There were, however, a small number of merchants in the Prior's Half, and something like a third of the weavers, while the dyers (who tended to congregate near running water) were more or less obliged to carry on their business in the Prior's Half or on the outskirts of the town at Spon or Gosford. In Coventry the dyers tended to be entrepreneurs as well as craftsmen, hanging out the wool for each of the processes until the cloth was ready for dyeing. It was they and the more specialized 'woaders' who held the secret of the famous 'Coventry blue' on which the town's prosperity was being built. 28

Already luxury goods, including cloth of silk with gold, of Samite, Diaper, and Baudelyns, skins of all kinds, salmon, lampreys, sea fish, honey, oil, cheese and butter, were on sale in the town. 26 Some of the goods came from a distance - from overseas or from Scotland and Ireland - some almost certainly from the forests and fields and the newly assarted lands of the manor of Coventry, and some from the industry of the townspeople. New immigrants were still coming in from the Midland counties, and merchants were being drawn from as far afield as Kendal and the sheep-rearing areas of Gloucestershire, Cambridge, and East Anglia. In the north the Prior had a Friday market and a yearly eight-days' fair, and in the south he claimed a yearly six-days' fair and assize of bread and wine. 27 Again, because running water was essential for their trades, the skinners and tanners and other leather workers gravitated to the Prior's Half where metal workers, especially goldsmiths, were now also better represented. Both 'halves' naturally had their fair share of those who sold provisions. They were mainly local men from the town itself or from the surrounding countryside. 31

Physically also the town was developing in both 'halves'. By the thirteenth century the place was fortified by a ditch, and the main entries were protected by 'bars'. In some instances there were two sets of bars on one route, the outer (since they probably protected the suburbs) indicating the more heavily populated nucleus of the town. Below the bridge was the low-lying marshy area of Bablake which may not have been drained for

25 Corpn deeds; G-H deeds; Cat. Anc. Deeds; Warws. Feet of Fines, i-ii; Cat. Anc. Deeds, passim. Cf. analysis in Lancaster (3), 152-3 which deals with the 12th and 13th centuries together.
26 E. Gooder, C. Woodfield and R. E. Chaplin, 'The medieval wool industry in the Coventry area' (1967), 82, quote list of goods to be taxed for paving the town in 1285, found in PRO PAT. R. 5 Edw. I, m 8a.
27 Corpn deeds; G-H deeds; Cat. Anc. Deeds; SBRO Hundred Roll of 1280. See also Dibben, 9-10. For the new nave see Stonelihg MSS: copy of Hundred Roll of 1280. See also Dibben, 10-12.
building until the following century. Further westwards, however, the suburbs stretched out along Spon Street to the outer bar at Barras Lane and even beyond to the new bridge at Spon. To the north the houses in the Prior's Half were protected by the bars in Well Street, those at the top of Bishop Street and those in Cook Street, with an outer set at St Nicholas to protect the suburb there. There is no archaeological or documentary evidence for ditches at this date on the north-east side of the town, but the River Sherbourne, curving round the priory precinct and continuing its course to the new bridges at Gosford, probably gave adequate protection. The outer bars on the east took in the Fat Gosford suburb beyond the bridges, and the inner one marked the extent of the town's hub on that side at Earl's Mill Lane. On the south side the Hyrsum-ditch seems to have been a continuation of the Red Ditch or the southern castle ditch, linking it with the Earl's Mill Lane bars. The Much Park Street and Little Park Street bars probably then marked the southern extent of the castle ditch as well as of the town ditch.32

Within the area enclosed by the ditches and bars the steadily increasing population, with its growing wealth, was laying down streets of houses, some built of the warm pink local stone, many with at least stone-built undercrofts sometimes lime-washed. In the Earl's Half the street development centred on Earl Street and was the direct result of the decay of the castle and the adoption of Cheylesmore as the residence of the lord of the manor. In the Prior's Half the street names appearing in the thirteenth century reflect the growth of the Prior's market. The roads leading outwards, also betokening a new interest in trade, were being improved, and bridges were being built in West Orchard, and across the Sherbourne and the Radford Brook by St John's Hospital where the street between the bridges was called St John's Bridges. Not only were new streets and houses appearing, but ancient buildings were being added to or rebuilt. The cathedral church was enlarged and a palace was provided for the Bishop; Holy Trinity church, which was destroyed by fire in 1257, was rebuilt as a large cruciform church; St Michael's, if not entirely rebuilt, received extensive additions; and Cheylesmore manor house and the Greyfriars' house date from this period.33

On the whole the parishes and hamlets surrounding the town had not yet greatly developed, being still more like clearings or assarts in the prevailing woodland and waste. In most places there were mills and open fields, and in some a developed manorial system. Already the wealthy landowners had appeared, the Langleyes with interests both north and south of the town as well as within it; the Segraves with a seat at Caludon - the only house which might be described as a permanent nobleman's residence in the whole neighbourhood of Coventry; and the Stoke family with lands in Stoke and Foleshill. Stoke was well placed, with the Coventry suburbs reaching out towards it, and the family were quick to see the advantage of their close proximity to the town.34

THE LATER MIDDLE AGES

For roughly a century after the death of the last Earl of Chester, the Earl's Half depended solely upon the resources of its merchants, tradesmen and craftsmen in its efforts to gain supremacy in the town. By 1350, however, when the manor of Cheylesmore devolved upon Queen Isabel, the battle for the Earl's Half, and indeed for the city and well-being of the whole town, was already won. In the previous year the royal licence to levy a tax for building a town wall was addressed to the Priory, but after 1350 grants of any consequence were addressed to the 'good men' or the merchants of Coventry. They obtained freedom from tolls on their goods in all parts of the kingdom, and subsequently acquired a guild merchant and further judicial rights. Meanwhile in 1316 the Queen's dispute with the Prior came before the Council in Parliament. She claimed the manor of Coventry and all judicial rights in it, while the Prior claimed the Earl's Half under the Molds' grant of 1250. The judgement has not survived, but subsequent events suggest that the Council found for the Queen, who in 1357 was confirmed as lord of the manor of Cheylesmore with the Prior's service, and four years later was said to be lord of the whole town. In 1344 the Queen's plans reached their culmination in Edward III's grant that the men of Coventry, tenants of the manor of Cheylesmore, should have a commonalty among themselves and should elect annually a mayor and bailiffs; they should have cognizance of all pleas, recognizances of debts, a seal and a prison. Almost immediately the Prior questioned the mayor and bailiffs' judicial rights and their very existence, but the Court of Common Pleas was bound to uphold a royal grant and an ensuing writ made it clear that Coventry lay within the manor of Cheylesmore. The Queen showered further privileges on the town, including a market, a fair and the judicial right of holding the view of frankpledge. In the King's confirmation the tenants of Cheylesmore also obtained the right to elect a coroner.35

The Prior made a last attempt to restore his position of a century ago, but in 1355, by what process we do not know, the Queen, the Mayor and Bailiffs and the Prior concluded an agreement known as the 'Tripartite Indenture' which was at last to bring unity and peace to the city and to the parishes and hamlets anciently linked with it. All the rights and privileges which would appear to have been granted to 'one half' only or at least to have been limited in some way, were to run throughout the whole town. The boundaries were re-defined, giving the Priory its precinct and a small area just north of it - Bishop Street and St Nicholas Street (probably the area later called the Bishop Street Lett) and the manor of Whitmore - a much depleted Prior's Half. The portmote and other applications privileged throughout the town, although the Prior would hold view of frankpledge for his own tenants and the assizes of bread and wine in the Prior's Half. The 'foreign' court at Wulhestedeg (apparently an ancient mote-place at the boundary between Foleshill and Exhall), which had featured in the suit of 1336, was to be held by the mayor and commonalty. The Prior's tenants in the new Prior's Half were to be eligible for the office of mayor, and other rights and jurisdictions were defined. Not only was the breach between the two 'halves' healed but the parishes and hamlets of the old manor of Coventry and of the Prior's Half were brought within the city's jurisdiction.36

During the late-fourteenth and the early-fifteenth centuries the city was gradually freeing itself from outside interference, whether directly from the King's ministers or from their jurisdiction through the county of Warwick. By the latter half of the fourteenth century the town was...
virtually self-governing, the Mayor exercising his administrative, legislative and judicial functions through the court leet (deriving from the feudal jurisdiction of the manor of Coventry), the parliamete (or town court), the Mayor's court and the sessions of the peace. Four Leet officers, the chamberlains and the wardens, were responsible for the town's finances, and for the administration of the city's lands, the ownership of which would become a significant factor in its history. The Council grew out of the Leet during the 1420s, but it is difficult to distinguish between either the personnel or the responsibilities of the Leet, the Council, and their several derivative bodies. It was a period of great activity, when the administrative, legislative and financial machine of city government was being shaped. The Leet, the Council, and the Trinity Guild were now the dominant factors in the city's affairs, not least in controlling the crafts and internal and external trade, and in reaping the profits therefrom.

All that the borough lacked were the full rights of county jurisdiction over the outlying parishes and hamlets. In 1451, after the city had sued for the extension of its franchises and liberties, Henry VI granted a charter making it a county in itself, to be known as the County of the City of Coventry. With one or two slight variations, the parishes and hamlets which had already been brought within the city's jurisdiction by the Tripartite Indenture were now legally included within the jurisdiction of the new authority. Politically the advantages were all for the city and little for the county areas, whose inhabitants were not eligible for the freedom of the city and thereby lost the franchise. 37

With its new unity and its growing self-government, the town prospered and its population increased. In 1377, when 4,817 people paid the poll tax, Coventry was apparently regarded as the fourth city in the kingdom, surpassed in wealth and population only by London, Bristol and York. 38

Coventry merchants had been in a favoured position since 1254 when their merchandise was freed from toll in all parts of the kingdom, and their rights in this privilege, if disputed, were always upheld in the courts. Their guild merchant, amalgamated in 1392 with the other new guilds of the 1340s and the later Trinity Guild, played a significant part in the deliberations of Leet and Council, even providing the building (St Mary's Hall) in which both Leet and Council met. 39

Coventry merchants had suffered during the wars with France and were all the time subject to robbery on the high seas. They operated at Rouen, at Bruges (where they seem to have been involved in a close ring of English merchants who were trying to create a monopoly), in Prussia, and in Ireland. Coventry itself was known as a centre for foreign merchants, and by the end of the fourteenth century royal purchases of cloth were being made, not in Bruges and the other centres abroad, but in London and in English cloth towns such as Coventry. It is probably for this reason that Coventry became a mint town in 1465. 40

The city, well placed (although the Sherbourne was not navigable) to use the English ports, had a large body of carriers, carriers and 'passengers' to transport goods by the highways which radiated from it to and from the ports or, in some cases, to the nearest navigable river. Coventry merchants used the port of Bristol for their exports as well as for importing foodstuffs including fish, raw materials such as alum and woad, and luxuries. They provided wool for Bristol's cloth trade, and possibly alabaster, while buying iron and Bristol-manufactured metal goods; they sent ships to Iceland in partnership with Bristol merchants. Coventry drapers used Bristol for exporting cloth to Portugal, and the east-coast ports for the Baltic market, sometimes using their own ships. Through Southampton Coventry merchants imported fish, and for a period of about fifty years they imported wood andadder in large quantities to maintain the standard of 'Coventry blue'. And wherever they traded they were exempt from toll. 41

The importance of the cloth trade to the town is reflected in the part the wool merchants played in its life. Its first and second mayors, John Ward and Jordan Shepey, and the wealthy Botoner family, who rebuilt St Michael's church at the end of the century, built their fortunes on wool. The merchants who dealt in wool or in the finished cloth or both made up at least half and probably more than half of the merchant class in Coventry, and most of them lived in the wealthy Earl Street area. The merchants (wool merchants, clothiers, dyers, drapers, mercers) were well supported by the craftsmen (particularly weavers and fullers) who made the cloth, and by those who made up garments from it. Between them they accounted for a third to a half of the entire merchant and craftsman population.

At the same time the demand for consumer goods other than woven garments and household utensils naturally increased and other trades benefited. Many metal workers (the next most numerous section of craftsmen) such as cardmakers, wiredrawers, needlers and pinners served the wool and the cloth trade. The goldsmiths, about one ninth of the whole metal-working community, settled mainly in Spicer Stoke (where there were also a few pewterers), not far from the great gate of the priory and in a good position for commissions for the cathedral church and for St Michael's and Holy Trinity, as well as for the pilgrims who came to St Osburg's shrine. Those who produced and sold food and drink came next; then the workers in leather and fur, nearly half of them shoe-makers. Finally, among an assortment of tradesmen who served the community in other ways, were carpenters and wheelwrights, saddlers, blacksmiths, and carriers and 'passengers' who made possible the long-distance carriage of goods between Coventry and the ports. 42

By the beginning of the fifteenth century craft guild organization in Coventry was so powerful that the town invoked royal charters to prevent the foundation of further guilds. The craft guilds' monopolies and the Court Leet's close control over the quality of Coventry cloth were at the same time a symbol of the importance of the cloth trade and the power of the merchants and the craftsmen, and a portent of the coming decline in the trade on which the city's wealth and position depended. It is significant that, although in 1397–8 the cloth sold in Coventry was more than six per cent of the cloth sold throughout the country, within eight years the amount sold locally had dropped by two-thirds. 43

37 Leet Bk, passim; Dibben, 278-8; Lancaster (3), 219-64.
39 Lancaster (3), 116.
40 Merchants from France, the Italian and the Hanse towns traded in Coventry. In 1469 Coventry was one of the three mint towns which included Bristol and Norwich (Cal. Pat. 1467–8, 446), and the Coventry mint pennied until 1669. For the activities of Coventry merchants at home and overseas, and of foreign merchants in Coventry, see Cal. Pat. 1337–77, 427; 1382–4. 574; 1377–30, 574; 1494–6, 589; 1446–7, 577; Cal. Close 1353–5, 487, 519; 1345–6, 68; E. M. Carter-Williams, op. cit., 422–3, 51; Lancaster (3), 106–7.
The fourteenth century and the first years of the fifteenth, when the effects of the new peace were still being felt, was a period of great building activity. The guild merchant, on its foundation in 1340, began building the first St Mary's Hall. Two years later the Whitefriars came to Coventry and began building on the ten acres of land granted to them on the eastern side of the town, and later in the century the Carthusians built St Anne's Charterhouse in the south. Queen Isabel gave land in Bablake to the newly founded St John's Guild: their first chapel was consecrated in 1350 and domestic buildings for their college of priests were put up north of it. A new Drapery was established near St Mary's Hall in 1351. Most of the craft guilds had chapels or altars in the two parish churches and the Corpus Christi Guild seems to have taken over St Nicholas church as its chapel. Towards the end of the century St Michael's church was largely rebuilt and greatly extended by the gift of the Botoner family who built the dignified new choir and the graceful steeple.

As work on St Michael's came to an end, the masons were transferred to work on a splendid new St Mary's Hall for the amalgamated guild of the Holy Trinity. The great hall with its panelled roof, angel musicians, heraldic bosses and tapestry, was linked to the original chapel of the Holy and Undivided Trinity and connected to the angel musicians, heraldic bosses and tapestry, was linked to the original chapel of the Holy and Undivided Trinity and connected to the Trinity Guild by a gallery. The walls of the new hall were finished in 1390, in celebration of the peace achieved by Edward II's licence to the Commonalty of 1363 and the submission of the town to Caesar's Tower which housed the city's treasury. At the south side of the hall was a large room or chamber, called the Prince's Chamber. St Mary's Hall, as the meeting place of both the Trinity Guild and the city's Court Leet and Council, reflected the close links between city and guild in local government and the power and prosperity derived from their intimate relationship. By 1411 the Corpus Christi Guild had built St Nicholas Hall in West Orchard, and some years later the shearmen and fullers acquired St George's Chapel at Gosford Bridge.

While these notable buildings were going up, a city wall and gates were replacing the earlier ditches and bars. The first stone of New Gate on the London road at the bottom of Much Park Street was laid probably eight years before Edward III's licence to the Commonalty of 1365 to build a wall and collect murage. Work began westwards of the gate and ten years later on the eastern side, but was interrupted by a revolt against the levy of murage which was regarded as an intolerable burden. In 1387 the wall was to take in Cheylesmore manor house and by 1390 the new wall had reached the eastern side of the town, and later in the century the Carthusians were replacing the earlier ditches and bars. The first stone of New Gate was laid by 1390 and certainly by 1410-11. A strong local tradition points to the cemetery of the Friars Preachers (who are not otherwise known to have existed in Coventry) in Greyfriars Lane. The old Drapery was in Palmer Lane. New Street is said to have been built for the masons and other craftsmen working on St Michael's. Jesus Hall, where priests serving Holy Trinity church lived, although 'founded' in 1409, was probably already in existence (Shap, 117-19).

The pageants which the craft guilds performed at Corpus Christi were yet another indication of the city's prosperity and of the effects of that prosperity on the life and outlook of the citizens. Probably ten groups of plays formed the Coventry cycle, and were performed by the ten most important guilds. Each guild had its pageant-house where it kept the stage, the vehicle on which it was erected and the other properties; and each pageant seems to have been presented at a traditional site in the city, perhaps one in each of the ten wards. The best known sites were in Gosford Street, Jordan Well and at New Gate, at the top of Little Park Street, outside the Greyfriars' church, at Smithford Street conduit, at Bablake Gate, and by the Cross at Cross Cheaping. In 1494 the Leet, recognizing that some once wealthy guilds were now unable to support a pageant unaided, while newer guilds were contributing nothing to this important feature of the city's life, ordained that such guilds should join with those already supporting a pageant to share the expenses. The changing pattern of guild responsibility for the pageants which ensued reflects therefore the changing fortunes of the guilds, the most striking being the sudden rise of the Cappers at the turn of the century.

Although the main street pattern is clear by the thirteenth century, the continuing growth and wealth of the population during the fourteenth century at least demanded more houses and new streets. The main area of development was in the less crowded northern part of the town where more streets for the sale of specific commodities appear. Lanes leading to merchants' and gentlemen's houses were beginning to be called after the name of the family. Le Scolelane proved the existence of a choir school. At town and countryside became more closely interdependent, the outlying areas began to develop as villages, some round a parish church (formerly a chapel of St Michael's), some round open fields and waste which often served as common land for Coventry citizens, and some near newly assorted and enclosed lands providing grazing for cattle or corn for the Coventry market. The open-field parishes with woodland and waste lay mainly to the north. Foleshill was the largest of them, with a number of big farmsteads and several small independent communities developing round the new bridges where the north-bound highways, thrusting through Foleshill, crossed streams and brooks. Sowe also was large, but was only partly in the county of the city. While its waste served several villages round about, it also provided grazing in plenty for the Prior's cows, oxen and sheep, Stoke and Sivichall had very different relationships with Coventry. Stoke benefited from its proximity to the town, and the family which owned the manor had important interests there, Robert de Stoke being thirze Mayor and Member of Parliament for the city. Yet Stoke was not close enough to be submerged by Coventry for it was separated from the walled city and the suburbs by Shortley over which its tenants had right of way for ploughs and carts on their way to the common fields outside the parish. Besides farming, Stoke also supported an important tile industry which served Coventry and the district round about. Sivichall seems to have developed by the fifteenth century as a residential area for those wealthy enough to live in substantial houses – probably Coventry merchants – who had no material connexion with the place. Whitley also had a character of its own, suffering both the advantages and the disadvantages of its situation on the London road. It supported mainly millers and brewers whose wares were much in demand by wayfarers. Some of the brewing, however, was
illicit, and there was an unusually high incidence of violence and theft. Ashhill and Horewell were depopulated by the time they were included in the county.48

Coventry itself had never been an open-field town like Leicester, but depended for the citizens’ commoning rights upon its county areas claimed from the encircling woodland and waste, which were used for supporting pigs and for getting timber and brushwood. They pastured their beasts—two cows and a cow, or two cows and a horse—on the commons and the Lammas and Michaelmas lands. These Lammas and Michaelmas lands were, however, only available for pasturing commoners’ beasts at Lammas after the hay harvest, or at Michaelmas after the wheat harvest; at Candemul the boundaries were closed again. At these lands increased at the expense of the commons, woodland and waste, and as owners of recently enclosed lands were themselves pasturing more beasts, the commons became seriously surcharged. The commoners therefore took matters into their own hands and from time to time from 1574 onwards broke into closes and threw down the fences of lands which would have become common at Lammas and Michaelmas.

In 1543, however, the new Mayor, Henry Peeto, concerned about the recent riots, instituted a survey of the common lands. While arable was necessary and land-owners were trying to make good the deficiency by enclosing more and more land, pasture was at a premium and the commons were even more heavily surcharged by the townspeople, the local magnates and the sheep-grazers whose flocks supplied wool for the cloth-merchants. While the Prior was adding to his enclosures, and the citizens were claiming commoning rights by force, the main battle was fought between the Bristow family of Whitley (who not only hedged parcels of common land and meadow for sowing corn, but also pastured their own and their tenants’ beasts on the commonland which remained) and William Saunders, Mayor in 1496, who took up the citizens’ case.

After an order of the Leet that all unlawful closes were to be thrown open by 1 November, he accompanied the people under arms and marched on the Bristow closes. The contest developed into a family feud, and Saunders’s son, Laurence, was in the end committed to the Fleet Prison. The Lammas-tide riots continued until 1545 when the numbers attending the chamberlains at the Lammas ridings were tightly restricted, but at Whitley they continued until 1549 when the owner at last surrendered to the city.49

THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

By the end of the fifteenth century the city’s wool and cloth trades had reached a low ebb. Guild monopolies and restrictive practices and the Leet’s close control were aimed at maintaining the high standard of Coventry products, but instead they strangled the enterprise on which trade and industry had flourished. The sumptuary laws did not help, and at Whitley they continued until 1549 when the owner at last surrendered to the city.49

48 E. P. Jacob, The 15th Century, 544; Leet Bk, passim and esp. 556–61; Lancaster (3), 535-64. For market arrangements by the mid-century see ibid. 166 and Leet Bk, 798, 807–8: on Friday, then the regular market day, the area between Broad Gate and the conduit in Cross Cheaping was to be kept clear of stalls, fishermen and sellers of tanned leather setting up their stalls below the conduit, and country butchers selling in Fleet Street and Jordan Well.
49 The figures for the wards are as follows: Earl St 707 persons; Smithford St 406; Gosford St 875; Much Park St 719; Bishop St 1028; Bayley Lane 419; Broadgate 112; Cross Cheaping 884; Jordan Well 114; and Spon St 627; Leet Bk, 64-7. See also ibid 105 and Lancaster (3), 165-6.
50 See VCH viii, 5–4, where it is suggested that, while Jordan Well and Spon St may have been under-counted in 1520, there was a full of 22,5 per cent in the other wards. Unless there was a movement from other parts of the city or from outside it into Jordan Well and Spon St, the fall in population is greater than the apparent 500. Mr C. Phythian-Adams has studied the 1520 and 1531 'censuses' in detail in his forthcoming book Coventry in Crisis, 1517–18: Dept of English Local History, Occasional Papers (Leicester University Press).
51 L. & P. Hen. viii (3), 133, 250, 255, 277, 321b; A. 146(a), 222; A. 146(b), R. 51, 41, 47, 47b, 14b, 18, 26, 206, 245, 247. See also VCH vii, 20, 704, viii, 111–2. The Corporation controlled new house-building on the Greyfriars’ site in the 16th and 17th centuries, and the site of the church was used as an orchard until 1800. Bradford’s Survey (1748–9) and an 1807 map show the steeple in the centre of the orchard and on a spot which Union St (out 1820) ran into info. Col. W. H. Johns.
52 L. & P. Hen. viii (3), 166, 279, 283 (2), 85a; Col. Pat. Eas. vii, 260. See also VCH iv, 105, 111, 132-4. Some of the Marpeloate Tracts were printed at Hales’s house at the Whitefriars, which stayed in the family until 1717.
COVENTRY

The city's distress, its decaying buildings, and the poverty of the inhabitants were all too apparent to those who travelled round the country observing the results of the Dissolution. They had be

its six spires and two towers; they even knew of St Nicholas as a ‘fair church'; there was talk of ‘three stately churches all in one cemetery, and two very fair houses of friars', the king's palace of Cheylesmore and the bishop's palace, city walls of 'darkish red deep', and many streets 'well built with timber'; while the fame of its cloth trade and its 'Coventry blue' was widespread. Leland, who describes all this, sadly ends with the words 'the glory of the city decayeth'. John Nichols, in his description of Elizabeth I's visit to the city in 1565, passes over the decay as did the Recorder in his speech of welcome in which he dwelt on the splendours of the past. The Queen was taken especially to the Free School, now the city's show-place, and to Hale's house at the Whitefriars where she stayed for two nights. The position seems not to have improved by the end of the century when, in spite of an experiment in 1568 for introducing new kinds of cloth – 'utterines' and 'crimp-lists' as made in Armentières – the city was described as poor and having 'no special trade'. Even the manufacture of blue thread was at so low an ebb that the little employment there was in it was reserved for men. In spite of decay, poverty and unemployment, the population seems to have remained much as it was in 1520. Again in 1586/7, when there was a scarcity of food, a local census was taken, which gave the number of men, women, and children as 7,122.44

With the Dissolution and the upsurge of puritanism in Coventry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the two parish churches entered upon a period of decline, but apart from the clearing of the monastic sites there was little change in the city's profile. A few new but relatively unimportant streets appeared. Amid the general atmosphere of decay, however, the cross at Cross Cheaping was replaced in 1541 at the cost of Sir William Holies, Lord Mayor of London (whose father had owned property and lived in Stoke), by a copy of Abingdon cross, a 'stately' seat of city government. The Corporation, now dominant in the city's affairs, purchased the hall in 1552 and was soon leasing out portions of it to the Drapers' Company and the Mercers' Company. The final achievement in the unification of the city came, however, in 1574 when the Corporation bought the Bishop Street Leet – the remnant of the Prior's half – from Bridget and Charles Hales.45

Some significant changes in the character of their trades and industries were taking place in the county areas, more particularly north of the city. Tile-making, which had flourished in Stoke, the centre of the industry in the Coventry district, since the fourteenth century, seems to have died out in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the two parish churches entered upon a period of decline, but apart from the clearing of the monastic sites there was little change in the city's profile. A few new but relatively unimportant streets appeared. Amid the general atmosphere of decay, however, the cross at Cross Cheaping was replaced in 1541 at the cost of Sir William Holies, Lord Mayor of London (whose father had owned property and lived in Stoke), by a copy of Abingdon cross, a 'stately' seat of city government. The Corporation, now dominant in the city's affairs, purchased the hall in 1552 and was soon leasing out portions of it to the Drapers' Company and the Mercers' Company. The final achievement in the unification of the city came, however, in 1574 when the Corporation bought the Bishop Street Leet – the remnant of the Prior's half – from Bridget and Charles Hales.45

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The Seventeenth Century

The century was characterized by a strong Presbyterian movement, experienced at first in the parish churches when the effects of the Laudian
reforms had faded, and developing in widespread dissent when, at the Restoration, John Bryan at Holy Trinity resigned and Obadiah Grew at St Michael's was ejected. Both returned to lead a strong dissenting congregation at the Leather Hall, while the Corporation restored St John's church for lectures by well-known Presbyterians. There was still sufficient interest, however, in the old parish churches, though they were stripped of their ornaments, for funds to be collected to rebuild the spire and tower of Holy Trinity church after they were blown down in the great storm of 1666. The sixteenth century had witnessed a complete break with the Middle Ages, and now, with the growth of the new schools and the foundation (in 1661) of the library at the Free Grammar School, Coventry was attracting scholars and others interested in the new thought.66 On the outbreak of the Civil Wars, Coventry was staunchly for the Parliament and remained so. Prepared for an attack on the city, it refused entry to Charles I, but the Roundheads, gathered at Southam, marched towards Coventry taking passengers by the way, routed the Calvinists at Dunsmore Heath and marched into the 'city where the country met us in arms and welcomed us and gave us good quarter for horse and foot'.

Nehemiah Wharton records that he found the city walled as well as London, with walls three miles long, four strong gates (guarded night and day by 40 men), battlements and towers. He noted the magnificent churches, the stately streets, 'several sweet and pleasant springs of water, enough to supply many thousand men' and the daily supply of venison from Lord Dunsmore's Park. Both during the Civil Wars and at the Restoration, parliamentarians, dissenters and the disaffected took refuge in Coventry.

There was grave danger of conspiracy in so well-defended a city, and in 1662 Charles II ordered the Lord Lieutenant of Warwickshire to destroy the gates, the walls and the fortifications. This would be less expensive than a garrison and the city could make use of the materials. Just as, over a hundred years earlier, the citizens had hastened the disappearance of the dissolved monastic houses by carrying away the tumbled stones by the load, now they fell upon the rubble from the slighted walls and gates and carried it away, at one shilling a load payable to the Corporation, to build walls round their own properties or to strengthen the foundations of their houses. Ten years later the Corporation had to prohibit any further robbing of the walls and initiated a policy of preservation.67

Firmly established as a close Corporation by the Governing Charter obtained in 1651, the Mayor and Council, for the most part Presbyterian and Parliamentarian, steered their way through the political and religious changes of the century. After the Restoration, the Corporation act excluded the more extreme, and from 1683 the Crown used its policy of preservation. 67

As in other places, plague visited Coventry, and in 1665 the Council issued special orders to prevent the spread of the plague from London.

68 Dibben, 51-6; A. 14(6) and (b) passim; Whitley, op. cit. 70-1; Lancaster (3), 465-7. C.f. Charles II's humbling of the city of London in 1665 (J. Levin, The Charter Controversy in the City of London, 1640-88 (1905), 50-5) and of other cities (St G. Clark, The Later Stuarts, and edn. 1955, 107-9).

Coventry men were not to buy and sell garments and cloth in London. Nevertheless there was an outbreak in the city in 1666 and again in 1669, and Coventry merchants lost goods in London during the great fire.69 There seems, however, to have been little change in the population. A census taken in 1644 when a siege was expected revealed a population of 40,000, but this probably included villagers from the county seeking refuge in the city, which was already crowded by the people brought in from the suburbs whose houses had been dismantled against a siege. Nevertheless by 1664, when the population had reverted to the more normal figure of 60,710, there was a shortage of houses and the Corporation allowed some of the city gates to be used as dwellings. With a sudden rise in the population at about the turn of the century the Corporation also let out the towers for habitation.70

In so well-watered an area there was an abundance of springs and wells, and the city had provided good conduits. During the seventeenth century, however, two citizens installed a pumping station to bring piped water to the houses. One system drew its supply from Conduit Meadow, the other from Swanswell Pool. Water was pumped to a cistern located on one of the remaining pillars of the cathedral crossing, the highest level in the city, and was piped from thence to the lower areas. An additional cistern was installed in Cuckoo Lane in 1672. This was the first and the most ambitious of a number of schemes to bring in piped water.71

The Civil Wars, far from impoverishing the city, seem to have enabled the merchants and traders and craftsmen to begin rebuilding its prosperity. When Marmaduke Rawdon visited it in 1665 he found 'a pleasant citie and of importance', with 'faire buildings, a cross of much workmanship, full of statues and rich work', two fair churches, and a convenient town house with faire kitchinge and larders, where they have great feastinge every year', but he bewailed the decay of the ancient trade of making round woollen caps. Twenty-five years later the Dean of Ross was also impressed by the cross, and was quick to notice the figure of Peeping Tom at the end of Broadgate. He took a walk in the Park which he describes as a fine outlet from the town, but most of the trees in the avenue of ashes had gone. The Corporation had had a Crown lease of the manor until 1659 and had let the manor house decay. When Sir Robert Townsend acquired the manor, the citizens lost their grazing rights in the 480 acres of the Great Park. Further enclosure earlier in the century at Whitley and at Gosford Green had ruined the people to action but by this time the trend towards piecemeal enclosure was so strong that the efforts of the Mayor and Council to maintain the commons


67 BM Harl. 6588, f. 49b; A. 14(b), 255, 268, 404; A. 14(c), 140; Bastille Gate was occupied before 1675, New Gate in 1681, and Bishop Gate in 1691. See also E. Goode's, Coventry's Town Wall (Cov. and N. Wars., Hist. Pamphlets no. 4, 1967); Buildings in New Rent (1588) were taken down during the Civil War and rebuilt in 1645. New Buildings were put up in 1646 to house people brought into the city in 1645 when their houses were pulled down against a siege. They were to be taken down again in 1651. See L. S. Bk. 664, A. 14(b), ff. 68, 11b, 48b, 211.

68 See above for Nehemiah Wharton's comments on the water supply. The following wells and springs are known to have existed: Brid (or Thrake) well in Well St (16th century); Dead Man's Well (17th century); Jordan Well, and Brandon's Well in Marsh Park St (14th century); Bishop St Well, Agnew Well in Cook St, Spoon Well outside the 'bams', Caludon Well (1411) by the door of St Michael's Church (1496); by St Mary's Hall (1526); Prior's Orchard (1612); Crow Lane (1682); outside Coach Gate (1685); Hobbs Hole (1689) (Corpus decimal, Cal. Chart. 1547-1641, 598; E 1641/205, 52b, 1740, 1759, 177b, 192b; B M Harl. 6588, f. 7; L. S. Bk. Council Minutes (A. 14, esp. A. 14(a), 602, 6et); L. S. Bk. 3rd P. Hen. S. III. The first public conduit was provided by royal licence in 1634 (Dibben, 11). The largest new installation before 1800 was the Corporation's Conduit Meadow works established c. 1780, using St Catherine's well (A. 14(b) and (g), passim). For a brief history of water supply in Coventry see Lancaster (3), 92a-3 and see map 6.
Coventry citizens saw enclosure as the destruction of their commoning rights, but they did not yet appreciate that the development of farms with enclosed fields in the country area, particularly in Foleshill, Stoke, Ansty and Caludon, was providing the urban area with a much-needed supply of food, not only wheat and vegetables, but also meat, milk, butter and cheese, as well as wool for the new worsted weaving.

There was little change by 1674 in the population of the county which remained fairly constant in Stivichall (43 adults), Walsgrave (78), Wyken (34) and Ansty (42). Numbers in Stoke, however, had risen to 69 and in Foleshill, the largest and the most rapidly developing, to 284. Wealthy residents were beginning to build themselves substantial houses in Ansty, Foleshill, Whitely and Wyken, while Stoke was becoming a desirable suburb where prosperous Coventry people had 'many fair summer houses'. Stivichall, on the other hand, persisted with its three-field system, protected by the Gregory family from encroachment by the near-by city. The main developments were naturally in Foleshill and Walsgrave-on-Sowe where prospecting for coal, begun in the previous century, was changing the face of the countryside and the lives of the people. Coal was being produced by 1614, but by 1680 flooding in the Hawkesbury, Sowe, and Wyken mines brought the venture for the time being to an end, although not before the industry had contributed to the improvement of the roads by which coal was brought into Coventry.¹³

The eighteenth century therefore opened in Coventry in an atmosphere of corruption and the suspicion of corruption, and indeed affairs did not much improve until the last twenty years of the century. The Corporation tried to curtail its expenditure, sold lands and other properties to increase its funds and mortgaged others. At the same time however, it continued granting leases to councillors at low rents, and placed with them contracts for corporation work, awarded exhibitions and other charity moneys to members' near relations, and used charity gifts and loans to secure the votes of the poorer freemen for corporation candidates in parliamentary elections. There was always an excuse to hand for the time being to an end, although not before the industry had contributed to the improvement of the roads by which coal was brought into Coventry.¹³

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The Corporation had heavy financial responsibilities, possessing as it did extensive lands in the city and in the city's county, and holding much of the revenue from these lands in trust for charitable purposes. Its administration during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of the flood of new benefactions must be seen against a background of severe upheaval and deep involvement in political and religious events. The fact remains though that it was found guilty of maladministration in respect of Sir Thomas White's Charity when an action was brought in Chancery in 1651. The evidence showed that, whilst the Corporation had leased lands to its own members at abnormally low rents, it had also received large fines which brought no benefit to the charity funds. Following the Chancery decree of 1711 the city's estates were sequestered until 1719, and the administration of the charity lands was not restored to the Corporation until 1724. The Corporation was coming to use the process in the main for political and personal ends, making and unmaking (i.e. disfranchising) freemen to secure the election of corporation candidates. So notorious was the situation in Coventry that two acts of parliament were necessary to prevent further political manipulation.

Traditional weaving, still at a low ebb, was further hit by the restrictions which the East India Company and the Levant Company were said to be placing on the export of cloth to India and Turkey. New types of cloth were, however, appearing - tammies, shalloons and calimancoes - but (even more important) the resilient Coventry merchants and craftsmen took up the new French fashion in silk ribbon weaving which had already received a new impetus from the French weavers, driven out by the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, who had set up in Coventry.¹⁴ Watch-making also was establishing itself as a new trade. The city's public time-pieces had been cared for and repaired locally, but the real prosperity of the trade was assured between 1747, when Samuel Vale (who was Mayor in 1777) established his watch-making business in the city, and 1750 when Rotherhams was founded.¹⁵ The twin development of silk-weaving and watch-making ensured prosperity in the city for another hundred years.

Encroachment on the pasture lands continued and by 1790 the freemen had formed a 'Graziers' Society' to protect their rights. When the Corporation acquired Cheylesmore Great Park and the manor house and grounds, the freemen retained their grazing rights in the Little Park, and the Great Park, now largely denuded of its trees and already a place of fashionable resort, became also a centre for amusement, being used partly for horse-racing. By the end of the century when Francis Seymour-Conway acquired the lease, even the great avenue of trees, planted in 1622, was felled and a policy of enclosure was dividing the park into gardens and fields. The manor house, no longer in single occupation, was converted into tenements, and the out-buildings, including the gatehouse, became dwellings. In the county, enclosure continued and cottage weaving was beginning to appear, particularly in Ansty, Foleshill, Radford, Keresley and Stoke. Roads were being extensively turned up, especially the London road and the northern exits, and a great avenue of oaks was planted along the Kenilworth road. With industrial development in the outlying areas of the county and a marked increase in the population, houses were built along the newly turnedup roads and across newly enclosed areas of heath to accommodate the ribbon weavers and the miners and the still quite large numbers of agricultural workers. This was especially true in Foleshill and its hamlets and heaths, where by 1801 3,026 people were living in upwards of 600 houses, and in Walsgrave-on-Sowe where there were 167 people (mainly industrial workers) within the county of the city and 236 (mainly agricultural) outside it. Walsgrave's development was much influenced by the new Coventry Canal which furnished cheap transport for its coal into Coventry.¹⁶

Industrial development and the new housing in the county were providing an outlet for the overcrowded population of the city, which was already showing signs of being stifled by its Michaelmas and Lammas fields. By 1748, while there was plenty of open land surrounding the city, and 1750 when Rotherhams was founded, the twin development of silk-weaving and watch-making ensured prosperity in the city for another hundred years.
there was little land not built on. Much Park Street and Little Park Street, which from the twelfth century had been the wealthiest part of the town, were still occupied by prosperous tradesmen, and Little Park Street more especially by county gentry who took properties there as town houses. Kirby house, for instance, would appear to have been built in the eighteenth century as a gentleman's house. Houses of equivalent beauty and style were being built on the site of the former cathedral church. The Half Moon Inn replaced the medieval Drapery, and a new stone building designed by Henry Couchman replaced the seventeenth-century Drapers' Hall in Bayley Lane in 1777. South of Holy Trinity church were the new g0ol (1792), and the county hall (1781-4) designed by Samuel Eglinton. North of Bishop Street, the Canal or Navigation Office was built in 1788 to accommodate the new Canal Navigation Company. Apart from the comparatively few notable eighteenth-century buildings, Coventry citizens had, from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, retained the existing half-timbered structures, converting them from fair-sized hall-type houses into two or three smaller tenements, each of two storeys, sometimes infilling with brick, but often casing the original façade with brick or plaster. Such multiple occupation and modernization took place in Gosford Street and Spon Street and probably also in Broad Gate, Cross Cheaping and Bishop Street, while Butcher Row retained its medieval houses with projecting upper storeys. The courtyard behind the Peacock Inn became the Women's Market in 1719, and soon afterwards the open Market Hall with its hipped roof and the brick watch house were built there. The site of the fifteenth-century Bull Inn and its extensive yard and bowling green became in 1751 the new Cavalry Barracks and the barracks square. The one major street development in the city was the widening of St John's Bridges in 1794 when the Free School Library was partly demolished, and by the end of the century the four main city gates had been taken down to ease the increasing flow of traffic.

One of the chief architectural developments of the century was the construction of new chapels for the increasing number of non-conformist protestant congregations. In 1701 a new Presbyterian Great Meeting was built near or partly on the site of the old Leather Hall, and in 1724 a secession from it merged with the Vicar Lane Congregationalists who together built a new chapel on the corner of Vicar Lane and Smithford Street. This congregation was swollen by seceders from the increasingly Unitarian Great Meeting. Vicar Lane seceders formed yet another congregation in West Orchard, where they built a small chapel in 1775. The new minister introduced Sunday Schools into Coventry, putting up the first Sunday School buildings in Hill Street. The Particular Baptists together built a new chapel on the corner of Vicar Lane and Smithford Street. This congregation was swollen by seceders from the increasingly Unitarian Great Meeting. Vicar Lane seceders formed yet another congregation in West Orchard, where they built a small chapel in 1777. The new minister introduced Sunday Schools into Coventry, putting up the first Sunday School buildings in Hill Street. The Particular Baptists built themselves a chapel in Jordan Well in 1724, leaving it in 1794 for a taller building.

The Friends were strong in Coventry during the first half of the century, and by 1730 formed the largest meeting in the county. A small church was partly demolished, and by the end of the century the four main city gates had been taken down to ease the increasing flow of traffic.

In 1700 the Friends in the city were chosen by a body of former and future councillors. They chose the treasurer and the auditors from among their own number and appointed the town clerk for life, and he, with his partner in private practice, held all the offices of profit for which a solicitor was required. The Leet continued making by-laws until about 1754, and the aldermen as justices of the peace heard presentments of offences against them. At Quarter sessions they fixed the county rate, appointed surveyors of the highways and heard disputes over apprentices. From 1790 the Street Commissioners, who included the mayor and at least one alderman, issued by-laws. They seem to have gone out of their way to act as independent administrators, appointing the officers by public competition and even ruling that they might not themselves accept contracts from the commissioners. Nevertheless they seem to have achieved very little. With the opening of the nineteenth century, administration in Coventry was ripe for reform. The Brougham Commissioners on the charities and the Municipal Corporations Commissioners found much to condemn, and the population of the county in 1842 sought release from the bonds which tied them to the city. Their rates were higher than Warwickshire rates, and the money they contributed benefited only those who dwelt within the city itself. Even the franchise was denied them. By 1800, however, the new trades were well established, the population was booming, and the city was well set for a new period of development and prosperity.82

The Gulsons and the Cashs stayed to support the new trade and to become the philanthropists of the next century, but the Friends never recovered their membership or their influence. Presbyterian and Unitarians remained throughout the century the most powerful religious and political force in the city, holding as they did a noticeable number of council seats and other public offices, while the majority of the Great Meeting's trustees were councillors and aldermen.79

While nonconformity flourished, the congregations of the two parish churches dwindled. Nevertheless the fabric of both churches was attended to; Thomas Swarbrick installed a new organ in each; and land from the priory site, the Bishop's Palace garden and at the west end of St Michael's was cleared to provide additional graveyards. A third parish, comprising Spon Street ward, was carved out of St Michael's and assigned in 1714 to the decaying guild church of St John which was restored, the floor being raised as a precaution against flooding.80

After the long period of decline, stagnation and decay, the prospect of a return to prosperity brought in new population from the surrounding countryside, from other Midland counties and from London. There are no precise population figures. Nevertheless, a statement in 1719 suggesting a recent increase is borne out by an estimated population of 13,920 in 1717. At the first census of 1801 the population of the city was 16,024 and of the county of the city, 5,154.81

The Corporation, in spite of the sorry history of its maladministration, made some (not very successful) efforts to reform itself. It was a closed corporation in the worst sense and all the officers except the town clerk were chosen by a body of former and future councillors. They chose the treasurer and the auditors from among their own number and appointed the town clerk for life, and he, with his partner in private practice, held all the offices of profit for which a solicitor was required. The Leet continued making by-laws until about 1754, and the aldermen as justices of the peace heard presentments of offences against them. At Quarter sessions they fixed the county rate, appointed surveyors of the highways and heard disputes over apprentices. From 1790 the Street Commissioners, who included the mayor and at least one alderman, issued by-laws. They seemed to have gone out of their way to act as independent administrators, appointing the officers by public competition and even ruling that they might not themselves accept contracts from the commissioners.

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81 Warwick Co. Records, viii (1953): Intro. ix sqq. by J. H. Hudson; Friends' Meeting House, Birmingham; Warws. Quarterly Meeting and Middle Monthly Meeting Minutes; W. White, Friends in Warwickshire in the Eighteenth Century (1894); J. Sheree and M. Caston, Independents in Warwickshire (1855); O.R. Great Meeting Vestry Minute Bks.; A. 14(e), f. 249; Holy Trinity and St Michael's Minute Bks.; 5 Geo. III, c. 27; Sharp, 11, 101-7, 113, 139-40; Povey, 13, 135. See also Lancaster (f) and Tomlinson, 128, 127-8, 157-9, 154-6, 176-9.
82 Bradford's Survey gives a population of 12,170 in 1748-9. This fall of nearly 2,000 may have been accounted for by the 'malignant' smallpox epidemic of 1737 (A. 14(f), p. 348). See also A. 14(f), 386; Gent. Mag. 1742, xliii, 547; 1801 census.
83 Lancaster (f), 167-73, 168-71.

In compiling the maps and plans reference has been made to documentary sources, to archaeological, architectural, geographical and historical articles, to engravings and to the following map sources: John Speed, The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain, 1677; The Ground Plot of Coventry in W. Dugdale, The Antiquities of Warwickshire, 1730; S. Bradford, A Plan of the City of Coventry (unpubl.); John Jeffreys, Plan of the City of Coventry, 1737 (MS in Coventry City Library); the County of the City, frontispiece to the Leet Bk.; J. Roper, The British Atlas (Eng. T. Sharpe, 1810); O.S. map of Roman Britain (2d edn 1906); O.S. Tewkesbury and Warwick in the 17th and 18th Centuries (1952); Newton and Co's 1930 English Atlas, John Cary, 1793; J. Sharp, Warwickshire Canals, etc., 1793; George Allen, Map of Britain, 1810; O.S. Plan of the City of Coventry, scale 1:500, 1888-9; O.S. Geological Drill Sheet 169.