

Warwick Street, Earlsdon 1861 to 1921

David Porter, Earlsdon Research Group

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INTRODUCTION

Warwick Street is one of the original eight streets of the Earlsdon estate, with approximately 21 houses of varying ages and styles together with a number of commercial properties. To add to this diversity, Warwick Street also has a complex of approximately 50 flats called Williamson Court constructed in 2007 as well as over 30 other flats built more recently at Berkeley Court and at the time of writing the brand-new Whittle Court. The street has a history going back over 170 years, stretching back to the very beginning of Earlsdon.

This paper examines the early development of Warwick Street. It looks at the origins of the street and, using the earliest and the most recent personal census material available for Earlsdon between 1861 and 1921, describes who lived there, where they came from and what they did.

THE GROWTH OF COVENTRY

Like any city, Coventry's history has passed through different phases, from being an important medieval centre, through industrialisation, to the development of a modern city. Its period as a major industrial centre has also depended on a variety of crafts and businesses. By the end of the 18th century, silk and ribbon weaving were the basis of the city's economy. During the nineteenth century, it became a centre of watch and clock manufacturing. In the later decades of that century there was growth in cycle manufacturing, later replaced by engineering and motor industries during the 20th century.

Present-day Earlsdon is one of the more diverse and affluent suburbs of Coventry. Its core area was laid out in the 1850s. It was one of a number of areas that were developed on the outskirts of the city, allowing better-off working people, especially watchmakers, to move their families and businesses away from poor conditions inside the city. Warwick Street was part of that core area.

As noted above, silk and ribbon-weaving were the basis of Coventry's economy at the start of the nineteenth century. Around 1820, 10,000 people were employed in the industry rising to a peak of 25,000 around 1857, at which time the total population of the city was approximately 40,000.ⁱ The industry faced a decline in the 1860s, following an international treaty with France which allowed the importation of foreign ribbons and other products, duty-free. However, in Coventry, watch and clock making were well placed to take over as main employers. The city was already one of the three major centres of the trade in the United Kingdom, the others being Clerkenwell in

London and Prescot in Lancashire. In 1860 there were 90 watch and clock manufacturers in the city, employing 2,100 people.ⁱⁱ

Coventry's early industries were home-based, rather than factory-based: many watch and clock makers worked in their own homes around the Spon End and Chapelfields areas of south-west Coventry.ⁱⁱⁱ These were the high-earners of the day, said to see themselves above the likes of weavers.^{iv}

Unfortunately, their industry was eventually hampered by a certain reluctance to innovate as well as by the impact of trade policies in the second half of the nineteenth century – such as happened when the United States placed a tariff on imported English watches – thus increasing their cost and leading to a decline in watchmaking in England. However, the skilled pool of workers was vital in assisting the growth of cycle manufacturing and machine tools, which became major industries. It also later helped the growth of car manufacturing, following the establishment of the first car manufacturer in the country at the Motor Mill, Sandy Lane, Radford in 1896.^v

Against this background, Earlsdon was one of a number of small communities originally established outside the urban area of Coventry, which is notable in that new building had tended to take place either within the city or beyond the "Lammas" and "Michaelmas" lands, where Freeman had the grazing rights^{vi} (a situation similar to the modern-day Green Belt).

A local farmer and butcher, John Moore, had built a farmhouse (called "Six Fields") in 1830 off what is now Moor Street. The 31 acre estate was sold to the Coventry Freehold Land Society in 1852. Many of the better-off working people wanted to move their families and businesses out of the city and away from the over-crowded housing and associated public health hazards. Membership of a Freehold Land Society offered such people an opportunity to move into their own house, perhaps with a workshop attached. This was one of six such sites developed by the Coventry Freehold Land Society during the middle years of the nineteenth century.

The Society laid out eight streets – Earlsdon Street, Moor Street, Cromwell Street, Arden Street, Warwick Street, Clarendon Street, Providence Street and Earlsdon Terrace, alongside Earlsdon Lane (see Appendix Map 1). The resultant estate comprised 250 self-build plots, each being supplied with water, as well as drainage for waste and rainwater but not for sewage. The Society hoped to sell the plots to members, who would then take out a mortgage and commission a builder to design and erect a house.

John Flinn, a watch manufacturer originally from Prescot and a member of the Society, built the first house, Earlsdon House, on Earlsdon Street. Attached to it was a workshop where 14 men and 5 boys were employed in watchmaking.^{vii} For Earlsdon as a whole, in 1861, out of 146 males in fulltime employment, 100 were employed in the watch trade.^{viii}

The initial development of Earlsdon was slow and uneven, reflecting the cycles of the city's economic fortunes during the second half of the nineteenth century. Some of the plots remained unsold for years, whilst others were sold but not developed. There were 10 houses in 1854, 107 in 1861, 114 in 1871 and 187 in 1884. Map 3 shows that less than half of the potential area had been developed by the 1880s. Indeed, a walk through the initial core area of Earlsdon will show that there are only short stretches of similar houses in any street – an indication of this gradual growth. Census figures also show that Earlsdon experienced considerable population change in its early years: about 60% of households listed in the 1861 Census had left by 1871; about 70% of households listed in the 1871 Census had left by 1881; and about 50% of households listed in the 1881 Census had left by 1891.^{ix} Nonetheless, despite this pattern of piecemeal change, Earlsdon continued to establish itself during this period, with Frederick Smith describing the new community at this time as "... a kind of garden suburb, established mainly by Coventry watchmakers, but it was up-to-date and had a School Board of its own and a small sewage farm."^x

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, this pattern of incremental change gave way to a period of dramatic growth, thanks in large part to the incorporation of Earlsdon within the municipal boundary of Coventry in 1890, and towards the end of 1898 the opening of Albany Road which provided direct and convenient access to the city, at the very time when the population of the city was beginning to increase significantly – see Appendix Table 1^{xi} – thanks in large part to the advent of the new cycle and motor manufacturing industries. In the period to the start of the First World War, these new developments saw the laying out of nearly forty streets and the building of over 2,000 houses on estates surrounding the original, mid-Victorian Earlsdon.^{xii} Owing to the city's industrial contribution to the war effort, by 1918 the growth in the city's population had reached a peak of approximately 142,000.^{xiii} Although there was a good deal of economic dislocation after the war as companies readjusted from wartime to peacetime production, giving rise to unemployment and even a slump by 1920, the fact remains that by the time of the 1921 Census Earlsdon was no longer a small, semi-rural settlement outside the city but

instead a well-developed, integrated suburb of Coventry. As the Coventry Graphic on 17th August 1912 had put it:

Everybody here knows what Earlsdon is like – a thriving, active, progressive suburb with its fine schools (another one is being built), golf links, well-equipped clubs, wide roads, up to date shops, motor works, picturedromes and tram service
There is no finer site within easy reach of the centre of the City. ^{xiv}

THE GROWTH OF WARWICK STREET

As with other streets on the Earlsdon estate, the development of Warwick Street and the details of those who lived there can shed light on the social and economic trends which affected the estate's inhabitants and those living nearby.

In the 1861 Census, the earliest we have with details for Earlsdon residents, only three households were recorded on Warwick Street, all of them located towards the middle of the street on the south-eastern side. In no particular order, one family living here at the time was that headed by Thomas Kirby (variously Kerby), a ribbon weaver originally from Spon Street, who together with his wife Sarah and four adult daughters were all recorded as ribbon weavers, in addition to his youngest daughter who was engaged in the associated task of silk filling. At this time, in the rest of Earlsdon there were only 12 other ribbon weavers, and so the Kirby family members constituted a third of all the weavers on the estate. ^{xv} Following the elimination of tariffs on imported ribbons in 1860, the livelihoods of weavers in Coventry and by implication those in Earlsdon also were severely impacted. To make matters worse for the Kirbys, on 24th June 1866 Thomas died, leaving his wife with "effects under £100". However, as was the case with many other individuals who returned to Coventry after experiencing financial difficulties in Earlsdon, according to the 1871 Census Sarah Kirby was recorded as living on Brook Street in Hillfields, where the practice of ribbon weaving continued but in industrial form with houses sharing a common power supply from a central steam engine. ^{xvi} All very different from her circumstances in Warwick Street on the semi-rural Earlsdon estate, Sarah was now living next door to a slaughterhouse with two of her daughters still weaving and filling silk, while Sarah herself was recorded as keeping a so-called suck shop, selling confectionery.

Next to the Kirbys when they lived on Warwick Street in 1861 were the Carvers and their infant niece. Joseph Carver was engaged in what for most individuals was the rather more prosperous trade of watchmaking and just like the Kirbys he and his wife Ann had moved from Coventry to the new estate of Earlsdon, where on 10th May 1852 – the first day sales became available – Joseph bought plot numbers 134 and 135. A year later, Joseph's mortgage records show that he had started building a house with a workshop on the latter plot, which although now demolished can be seen in Images 5 and 6 in the Appendix. However, it seems clear that Joseph began to experience financial difficulties because in 1855 and 1861 records ^{xvii} show him arranging further mortgages, until according to a conveyance dated 23rd December 1861 – just months after the census was taken – Joseph's property was sold by his creditors to James Walker, a master watchmaker living on Earlsdon Lane, the sale having been publicised in a notice published by the Birmingham Court of Bankruptcy in the Coventry Herald the previous month, after which date the Carvers' whereabouts remain unclear. ^{xviii}

The third family resident on the street in 1861 must have been all too aware of the Carver's difficulties. This household was headed by Joseph Aston Atkins, also then engaged in the watch trade, who lived with his wife Eliza and his nephew as well as an apprentice from Ireland, both learning their trade from Joseph. Like his watchmaking neighbour, on 10th May 1852 Joseph bought land on Warwick Street – albeit just one plot, number 131 – and subsequently arranged a mortgage to allow him to build a house with a workshop in 1855. However, by the time of the 1871 Census, Joseph was no longer recorded as a watchmaker but rather as a licensed victualler, or what would be commonly termed today a publican. Clearly, at some point in the intervening years, Joseph had decided to change profession and arguably with some success, as by this time his household included a domestic servant. While this can only be speculation, perhaps on the evidence of his neighbour's bankruptcy Joseph had concluded that owning a pub might offer a more secure living. Whatever the case, he did not have long to enjoy his new status as on 21st October 1871 Joseph died aged only 47, but he nonetheless left Earlsdon a notable legacy as the house he built is still well known today as The Cottage Inn. ^{xix}

The experiences of these three households recorded on Warwick Street echo a number of wider trends. As one example of these, as happened across Coventry during this period, the numbers of individuals in Earlsdon engaged in silk ribbon weaving fell significantly, such that by 1871 the 18 weavers identified on the estate ten years earlier had dropped to only four, three of these

members of just one family on Cromwell Street, with none of them on Warwick Street. In contrast, watchmaking was central to Earlsdon's economy at this time, albeit not immune to periodic declines in activity with direct implications for Warwick Street residents as we have seen. These changing fortunes resulted in numbers of Earlsdon residents who had earlier moved out of Coventry choosing -- or perhaps being forced by circumstance -- to return to the city when times were hard. In fact, although the number of Warwick Street residents grew from 14 to 26 over this decade, the population of Earlsdon as a whole fell from 492 to 472 ^{xx} while a good number of the plots of land bought in the 1850s – many of them it would seem on a purely speculative basis – remained unoccupied.¹

Against this pattern of flux and uncertainty, other households in contrast appeared to present a degree of constancy. One such example is the family of William Henry Mayo, a watch finisher who lived on the corner of Warwick Street and Arden Street for at least 40 years.² Like so many of his neighbours, Mayo moved from Coventry to take up residence in Earlsdon and in the 1871 Census was shown at the age of 29 living with his wife Ann and their two infant daughters. In addition to this, in the same year, in a house just near The Cottage Inn, Mayo's teenage sister Louisa Elizabeth was recorded as living with the watch finisher Charles Keene and his wife Caroline (née Mayo), making Charles and William brothers-in-law. However, the close presence of kith and kin – a situation which not many new residents on the estate enjoyed – was probably not the blessing that this might first appear to have been, because a report published in the Coventry Standard in 1869 reveals that Charles brought a court case against William for having threatened “to knock his block off”. The report went on to explain that an argument had arisen over financial matters but because the court determined that “... considerable provocation had been given by the complainant ...” in this regard the case was dismissed.^{xxi} It is clear that matters did not rest here, as from the detail recorded in a 1915 death notice published in Waterbury, Connecticut, we learn that Charles and Caroline emigrated to the United States in 1872, following the example – according to reports from parliamentary debates at around this time ^{xxii} – of several thousand Coventry residents who moved abroad in search of greater prosperity.

¹ Indeed, plot number 134 bought by Joseph Carver was not used for building until the early years of this century.

² Confusingly, the census enumerators in 1871 and 1891 chose to include the Mayo household among the returns for Arden Street, while for all the other census returns used the household was recorded as living on Warwick Street, which majority decision will be observed here.

Back in Earlsdon, in the 1881 Census Mayo was recorded as a watch examiner, which role involved checking the work of a watch finisher and preparing watches for sale, living with Ann and now two sons as well as a boarder in the household.³ At this point, another newspaper report reveals interesting details of the lives of the residents on Warwick Street, while also hinting at wider economic changes with implications for the Earlsdon estate. The report in question published in the Coventry Herald in September 1880 concerns the sale of the house occupied by the Mayo family, together with the adjoining watchmaker's workshop described as "... having room for 15 seats ...", in addition to space for building both here as well as on two more adjoining lots also for sale on Arden Street.^{xxiii} Whether or not William was in a position to buy out his landlord as opposed to continuing to rent his house is unknown, but what is known is that the vendor was George Harper, who is tellingly described in the advertisement as "... declining the watch trade ..." having previously worked as a watch case springer. By interesting coincidence, in 1872 he had married Joseph Aston Atkins's widow Eliza, thereby becoming publican at The Cottage Inn.^{xxiv}

As for the Mayo's domestic arrangements, the 1891 Census shows that they went on to have another son, bringing the total number of children to five. Apart from this youngest son who was still at school at this stage – in all probability at the newly-built Earlsdon School, where his father had only the previous year given up his post as a member of the School Board – and with the exception of the oldest son who was recorded as a clerk, both of the daughters were working in the watch business with their father while the remaining son was serving his apprenticeship with him in the same trade. Another ten years on, the 1901 Census reveals that the household at 61 Warwick Street was much smaller, with only their teenage son Walter still living at home with William and Ann, while in 1911 we see the same individuals still in the same house, but now with Walter's wife and their two children. Within a year, William had died at the age of 71 and was buried in London Road Cemetery with Ann – having moved in the meanwhile to 99 Berkeley Road South -- joining him in 1934 aged 90.

Turning from the experience of individual households to the pattern of change for the street generally as revealed in Tables 2 and 3 in Appendix 1, while only three families were living in Warwick Street in 1861 both the number of households and the total number of residents on the street increased in every subsequent census, the only street where this pattern of decade upon

³ The William Henry Mayo in focus here was born in 1842, whereas his older son by the exact same name – born in 1874 – went on to become publican at The Royal Oak between 1895 and 1930.

decade growth is found. Elsewhere on the estate, other streets underwent periods when the growth in the number of residents stagnated or even declined, as was particularly noticeable in the case of Arden Street for example between 1861 and 1871.⁴ From the later years of the nineteenth century onwards, however, the pattern of change on Warwick Street mirrored that found elsewhere on the estate, when the number of Warwick Street residents accelerated as the growth of the bicycle and motor industries began to have a noticeable impact, compounded by the effect of the opening in 1898 of Albany Road which allowed direct access to the centre of Coventry for the first time. Indeed, the figures drawn from the census returns show that between 1891 and 1921 the population of Warwick Street more than doubled, resulting in an average number of five residents in each household in 1921, the highest figure on the estate at this time.

Against this unbroken growth trend, it is interesting to note that for much of the period under investigation here the proportion of heads of households who had been resident in the subsequent census was relatively low. Indeed, in 1911 as just one example, this proportion stood at only 12%, the lowest figure on the estate, indicating a considerable turnover of residents in the early years of the century. In contrast to this, just ten years later the proportion was much higher at 33%, a figure much closer to that found on other streets in Earlsdon and suggestive of residents being much more willing during this later period to continue living here.

Focusing on the properties on Warwick Street rather than the households within them, there have self-evidently been many changes over the decades with buildings appearing, undergoing modification and in some cases disappearing altogether. Although not immune from change, arguably the most recognisable house on the street and certainly one of the oldest is The Cottage Inn. As already mentioned, the history of this house has already been very comprehensively well documented elsewhere by the eminent local historian Mary Montes and so the focus here will be on another prominent house at 7 Warwick Street, still known today as Warwick House.

On the basis of information derived from newspaper notices, street directories and census returns, it is clear that by 1881 Warwick House was owned and occupied by Richard Morley and his wife Mary, aged 43 and 41 respectively. By way of background, both husband and wife were born in London but were married on 1st January 1863 at St Thomas' Church on the Butts in Coventry, since Mary was living locally on Craven Street at the time. The 1871 Census showed

⁴ For detail on this point, see the accompanying paper in this series concerning Arden Street. ^{xxv}

them living in Islington, where Richard -- together with two apprentices and a boy -- worked as a compensator balance maker, the manufacture of which allowed for watches which were much less sensitive to temperature fluctuations. By 1879, it is clear that the Morleys had moved to Coventry, as a newspaper report was published at the time concerning a case brought by Richard against one of his apprentices who had failed to report for work on 15th September of that year; reassuringly, while the apprentice pleaded guilty, Richard told the court that he “ ... had no desire to press harshly against him” and the case was adjourned. ^{xxvi}

In the following year, Kelly’s 1880 Directory recorded Richard Morley, watch balance maker, based on Earlsdon Street, but clearly he was set on commissioning a new house as another newspaper report dated 4th August 1880 reports that the building plans which a surveyor had drawn up on his behalf had been passed. ^{xxvii} Somewhat confusingly, the report states that these plans were for the “... erection of one house in Moor Street, Earlsdon, for Richard Morley ...” and yet as there are no records of the Morleys living after this time anywhere else other than on Warwick Street, it is tempting to speculate that the new house in question was in fact Warwick House and that the Morleys were its first inhabitants.

While it has already been established from the 1881 Census that the Morleys were by this time living on Warwick Street, firmer evidence that it was Warwick House which they lived in comes not from the census returns – which until 1901 gave no numbers for houses on the street – but rather from two notices of sale which appeared in the Coventry Herald following Richard’s death in 1886.⁵ The earlier notice gives some indication of the status of the occupants, listing among other desirable possessions a cottage piano forte and even a full-length enamelled bath complete “... with patent crown boiler ...” as well as a large collection of watchmaking tools together with 300 balances in various stages of completion. ^{xxviii} The second notice later in the same year gives details of the sale of the house itself, with amongst other features four bedrooms, a drawing room and a dining room as well as extensive gardens. In addition, this being a substantial watchmaker’s house, there was also “watch makers’ shopping to seat twenty hands”, discreetly accessed by a separate entrance and equipped with its own earth closet. ^{xxix}⁶

⁵ Mary Morley did not outlive her husband by long, dying just three years later in 1889.

⁶ In best estate agent fashion, further particulars appear in the Appendix below together with images of the house.

Following the Morleys, the next household in residence at Warwick House was that of the Salmons, who were originally from Rugby. A plumber by background, the head of household George was recorded in the 1891 Census as an inspector of weights and measures, sharing the Warwick House with his wife Mary, their two daughters, his sister-in-law and his infant niece. Clearly, their new residence suited their purposes, as the returns for the 1901 and 1911 show the Salmons continuing to be based at Warwick House, with a domestic servant to complement the household. According to his obituary, which showed him as resident on Grosvenor Street where he was just a short distance away from the Baptist church he attended on Queen's Road, George died aged 71 on 12th July 1916 "... a well-known and much-respected citizen ..." who had retired from his post as inspector the previous year having been widowed the year before that. ^{xxx}

By the end of the period under examination here, a third very different family called the Parsons had moved into Warwick House, all having been born in Cornwall. In detail, the 1921 Census showed the head of household as John Parsons living together with his wife Anne, the other household members including a son, a daughter and a nephew studying engineering at Armstrong Siddeley. John himself worked at home on his own account as a "general and art woodworker", in addition to being an employer at a motor body builders and sidecar manufacturers on Earlsdon Avenue. Checking the census records there reveals another Parsons household, including two more of John and Anne Parsons' sons from Cornwall called Howard and Morley. Together with their father they ran Jno Parsons & Sons in the Cromwell Works at what was then 12 Earlsdon Avenue – where the sons also lived – now part of the site occupied by the Elsie Jones Home retirement complex.⁷ Their motor body and sidecar company must have enjoyed some success, as a copy of a letter found in the Coventry Archives⁸ proves it was still operating from these premises some fifteen years or so later, by which time John and Anne Parsons had left Earlsdon and moved to 135 Kenilworth Road near the junction with Gibbet Hill Road.

On the basis of the inhabitants of Warwick House alone, it is clear that considerable numbers of people were drawn from other parts of the country to come to live on Warwick Street, as was the case in the rest of Earlsdon and indeed the wider city of Coventry. Looking in detail at the origins of Warwick Street residents over time as shown in Tables 4 and 5, which give the places of birth of

⁷ The address 12 Earlsdon Avenue is today renumbered and renamed as 67 Earlsdon Avenue South, which forms one part of the complex mentioned

⁸ See Image 10 in the Appendix below

heads of household and all residents respectively, some observations can be made in this regard, although it needs to be borne in mind again that the street was one of the smallest on the estate with just three households in 1861 as we have already seen. Starting with the heads of household, while it is the case that London, Northamptonshire and Staffordshire rank highest overall as places of origin outside the immediate area, there are no obvious patterns here as only small numbers of individuals arrived from a wide range of different parts of the country for much of the period under examination. What is very clear, however, is that the preponderance of heads originating from what we would think of today as the local West Midlands area fell over time from 100% in the early years to about one half of the total by 1921, which is lower than the proportion on most of the other streets on the estate. As for the figures concerning all residents, again London, Northamptonshire and more notably Staffordshire rank highly as places of origin, with the proportion of residents born in the local area dropping to around one third of the total, similar to the level elsewhere on the estate.

To make these patterns of change somewhat clearer, in the following table the proportions of residents originating from outside the area during the earlier years are compared with those for the later years:

	Average 1861 -- 1881	Average 1901 -- 1921
Household heads	28%	55%
All residents	14%	30%

1. Proportions of Warwick Street residents born outside Coventry, Birmingham and Warwickshire

In overall terms, it appears that that heads of household were increasingly likely to have relocated from other parts of the country, presumably to take advantage of the increasing employment opportunities in the area, with some of these marrying locally.

The age distribution of the residents on the street reveals other changes over time. Looking firstly at the figures for heads of household in Table 6, after some degree of fluctuation it is clear that the proportion of heads aged between 31 and 40 grew markedly from around the beginning of the twentieth century to reach almost half of the total number by 1911. In the following ten years, during which time we have already seen that the number of heads appearing in the subsequent census rose noticeably, the age bracket with the highest number of heads unsurprisingly switched to that between the ages of 41 and 50, with the average age of heads on Warwick Street climbing

from an average of 42 in 1911 to 48 in 1921, one of the higher average ages on the estate at this time.

As for all the residents appearing in Table 7, in 1861 there was only one child living on the street, which goes some way to explain why Warwick Street appears to be unique in that the average age of the residents was higher in 1861 than it was in 1921, the opposite of the trend seen elsewhere on the estate. The relative lack of children on the street did not continue for long, however, such that by 1891 one-third of the residents were under the age of 13, resulting in an average age for the street at that time of only 22. In the years leading up to 1921, the proportion of youngsters dropped while that of the residents aged 41 and over rose, helping to account for the rise in the average age of all residents to a figure of 28 in 1921.

The final set of data to examine here is drawn from Table 8, which is based on the details of occupations recorded in the census returns. As has been mentioned before, the total population of residents on Warwick Street remained relatively low throughout the period under examination, and so of course the numbers engaged in any occupation at a given time may seem very small. Having said this, clear trends can be established from these figures, which from the outset are very similar to those seen on the other streets on the rest of the estate.

To assist in the process of analysing the occupations data for Warwick Street it is possible to identify three phases of development, the first spanning the early years from the earliest years until the 1880's. In detail, as we have already seen, the 1861 Census revealed a mix of ribbon weavers and watchmakers, both of which groups were to experience downturns in trade – particularly the former – over the next decade. By 1871, the weavers had left Warwick Street for good, but after a slight dip the number of watch makers grew again to reach a peak of 12 in 1881, which year also marked the industry's peak across the city.^{xxxii}

The second economic phase identified here runs from 1891 into the first decade of the twentieth century, marking a period of transition. As already noted, during these years Earlsdon was incorporated within Coventry and subsequently became much more closely linked to the city with the opening of Albany Road and the opening up of tram services to the city in 1905.^{xxxiii} At this time, the number of watchmakers on the street dropped by half⁹ while other employment

⁹ Clearly, watchmaking did not disappear as quickly as ribbon weaving had, and as one small indication of this it is interesting to note that the return for The Cottage in the 1891 Census records the then head of household – Alfred Harper – working both as a “Licensed Victualler and watch finisher.”

options opened up. As happened widely across the rest of the Earlsdon estate, the returns show numbers of residents working as railwaymen in various capacities, increasing to reach a total of seven on Warwick Street by 1911. At the same time, two more trades appeared in the returns during this middle period, with two residents engaged in cycle manufacture and a further two working as carpenters in 1901. This is perhaps to be expected, as during this period Coventry became the leading centre of bicycle production, with Earlsdon itself having cycle manufacturers on a number of streets.¹⁰ Interestingly, the two carpenters may perhaps have been involved in the burgeoning housebuilding industry at this time but in both cases they were later recorded as working in the new motor industry making car bodies, as seen above in the case of the Pearsons. It should be added here – no doubt because of the increasing prosperity which the new developments mentioned above gave rise to – that in 1901 four residents are recorded as working as domestic servants and/or nurses. Finally, as if to cement the notion that this was indeed a phase of transition, just one watchmaker remained on the street by 1911, namely William Henry Mayo.

The third phase between 1911 and 1921 is characterised by further development and consolidation of the trends identified above. As one example of this, within Earlsdon itself and across Coventry the manufacture of motorcycles and motor cars came to the fore, with the latter providing employment to at least 21 residents by 1921, in companies such as Daimler, Rover, Rudge Whitworth, Standard and Swift, as well as other companies providing components and ancillary services such as Coventry Chain and Jno Parsons & Sons. Another significant source of employment as revealed by the 1921 Census stemmed from the growth of toolmaking, with residents working for the well-established company Alfred Herbert Ltd as well as at the top end of Warwick Street itself the nascent Coventry Gauge & Tool Ltd. From small beginnings, this company took over the site – which had been previously occupied by the Viking Motor Body Company on Warwick Street until 1913 – growing by 1918 to have 120 employees, with further continued expansion over the following two decades resulting in the extensive buildings which can be seen in Map 8 and also in Image 13 in the Appendix.^{xxxiv}

Looking at the details of where the residents of Warwick Street worked, which information was not recorded in the census until 1921, it is noticeable that by this time a considerable proportion

¹⁰ One such firm was Allard & Co, operating from 38 Moor Street, the co-founder of which – Fred Allard – is shown living on Warwick Street in the 1891 Census, where he was described as a “professional bicycle rider.”

of residents lived in Earlsdon but unlike their forebears were employed in enterprises based elsewhere in the city, benefitting from a wider range of employment opportunities made possible by much improved transport. In addition, it is striking to see the sheer range and growing diversity of occupations during the final decade of our survey, serving the needs of the new, fast-growing suburb of Earlsdon, as reflected by the fact that as many as eight of Warwick Street's residents were recorded in 1921 working in the retail trade.

CONCLUSION

To illustrate just how different Warwick Street was during its early years, even four decades after it was first laid out, one almost comical incident drawn from a report in the Coventry Times might help. It concerns the swift actions of a local police constable, who one summer morning in July 1889 stumbled upon a herd of 14 cattle roaming Warwick Street. The marauders in question – who outnumbered the houses on the street at this time – belonged to Coventry Freemen and had strayed from Hearsall Common onto the adjoining Earlsdon estate, where it is reported that they manifested "... a liking for flowers and vegetables growing in Earlsdon gardens."¹¹

While a good case can be made for the claim that it took some decades for the Earlsdon estate to establish itself, nevertheless the arcadian image this story conjures up would not remain representative of the state of development on Warwick Street for very much longer as the number of residents quadrupled in the period between 1861 and 1891 to reach a total of 57 individuals, the preponderance of watchmaking already giving way to other trades during this time. This number was to double again over the next two decades, as Warwick Street, the burgeoning suburb of Earlsdon and the now conjoined city of Coventry experienced a striking period of expansion owing to the growth of cycle and then motor manufacture, as well as other industries involved in activities such as toolmaking. In the guise of the Coventry Gauge and Tool company, this would give rise on Warwick Street to one of the largest factories to appear in Earlsdon, which in turn would ultimately give way to the flats which have sprung up to complement the houses erected in the Victorian and Edwardian eras, resulting in the Warwick Street we see today.

¹¹ For the curious, the full story can be seen in Image 15 in the Appendix

NOTES ON METHODOLOGY

The principal source of information has been the censuses from 1861 and 1921. These generally provide information on the following: numbers of people in dwellings, household composition, names, relationships, age, occupation, place of birth and employment status. The censuses provide consistent information, enabling the analysis of trends over time. This has been supplemented by information from property deeds, probate records, newspaper entries, directories and maps as well as holdings at the Coventry Archives.

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- David Fry for providing insights into and images of Earlsdon over and above those available through his books about Coventry
- Jim and Anne McMurray, who kindly allowed access to the original title deeds relating to the Carver household at 12 Warwick Street

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APPENDIX 1 -- TABLES

Table 1: Population of Coventry 1901 to 1921

	1901	1911	1921	Increase 1901-1911	Increase 1911-1921
Population	69,978	106,349	128,157	52.0%	20.5%

Table 2: Heads of Household Living in Warwick Street Also Listed in Preceding Census

	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921
Number of Heads	3	6	10	13	21	25	27
Preceding census	N/A	1	1	1	3	3	9
Percentage	N/A	17%	10%	8%	14%	12%	33%

Table 3: Total Residents and Average Household size 1861 to 1921 (Warwick Street)

	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921
Households	3	6	10	13	21	25	27
People	14	26	50	57	80	117	136
Ave H'hold size	4.7	4.3	5.0	4.4	3.8	4.7	5.0

Table 4: Place of Birth of Heads of Household 1861 to 1921 (Warwick Street)

	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921	Total
Coventry	3	4	3	4	10	7	8	39
Adj Coventry*								0
Birmingham			1	1		2	2	6
Warwickshire**			1	3	3	4	4	15
Bedfordshire			1					1
Berkshire				1	1			2
Buckinghamshire			1			1		2
Cambridgeshire								0
Channel Islands								0
Cheshire					1	1		2
Cornwall							1	1
Derbyshire								0
Devon								0
Dorset								0
Durham								0
Essex								0
Gloucestershire				1				1
Hampshire						1	1	2
Herefordshire						1	1	2
Hertfordshire								0

	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921	Total
Huntingdonshire								0
Isle of Man								0
Isle of Wight								0
Kent					1	1	1	2
Lancashire			1			1		2
Leicestershire					1	1	1	3
Lincolnshire					1			1
London			2			1		3
Norfolk				1				1
Northamptonshire				1	1	1	1	4
Northumberland							1	1
Nottinghamshire								0
Oxfordshire		1						1
Rutland								0
Shropshire							2	2
Somerset					1			1
Staffordshire		1		1	2			4
Suffolk							1	1
Surrey							1	1
Sussex						1		1
Wiltshire								0
Worcestershire							1	1
Yorkshire						1		1
Ireland								0
Scotland						1		1
Wales								0
Germany								0
India								0
United States							1	1
Total	3	6	10	13	21	25	27	105

* Adj Coventry refers to parishes then outside, but later absorbed into, Coventry

** Warwickshire refers to the county without Coventry and Birmingham

Table 5: Place of Birth of All Residents 1861 to 1921 (Warwick Street)

	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921	Total
Coventry	11	18	33	27	49	49	76	263
Adj Coventry*				1		1	2	4
Birmingham			2	3	5	8	6	24
Warwickshire**	2	4	5	12	8	15	11	57
Bedfordshire								0
Berkshire		1		1	1	1	1	5
Buckinghamshire			1	1		3		5
Cambridgeshire								0
Channel Islands								0
Cheshire					1	1	5	7
Cornwall								0
Derbyshire								0
Devon								0
Dorset								0
Durham								0
Essex								0
Gloucestershire				2				2
Hampshire						1	1	2
Herefordshire					1	1	1	3
Hertfordshire								0
Huntingdonshire								0
Isle of Man								0
Isle of Wight								0
Kent						4	1	5
Lancashire			2		1	7	1	11
Leicestershire					2	2	2	6
Lincolnshire					1	1		2
London			6			5	4	15
Norfolk		1		1				2
Northamptonshire				3	2	4	2	11
Northumberland							1	1
Nottinghamshire					1			1
Oxfordshire		1		2	1			4
Rutland								0
Shropshire				1		1	3	5
Somerset					1	1		2
Staffordshire		1	1	2	6	5	3	18
Suffolk							5	5

	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921	Total
Surrey							3	3
Sussex						3		3
Wiltshire				1				1
Worcestershire							5	5
Yorkshire						3	1	4
Ireland	1							1
Scotland						1		1
Wales							1	1
Germany								0
India								0
United States							1	1
Total	14	26	50	57	80	117	136	480

* Adj Coventry refers to parishes then outside, but later absorbed into, Coventry

** Warwickshire refers to the county without Coventry and Birmingham

Table 6: Age Distribution of Heads of Households 1861 to 1921 (Warwick Street)

	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921
< 21	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
21-30		2	2	4	3	3	1
31-40	1	1	2	3	8	11	8
41-50	1	1	3	4		5	11
51-60	1	1	1		4	3	5
61-70			2		1	3	1
> 70		1		2	5		1
Total	3	6	10	13	21	25	27
Average	45	45	45	39	49	42	48

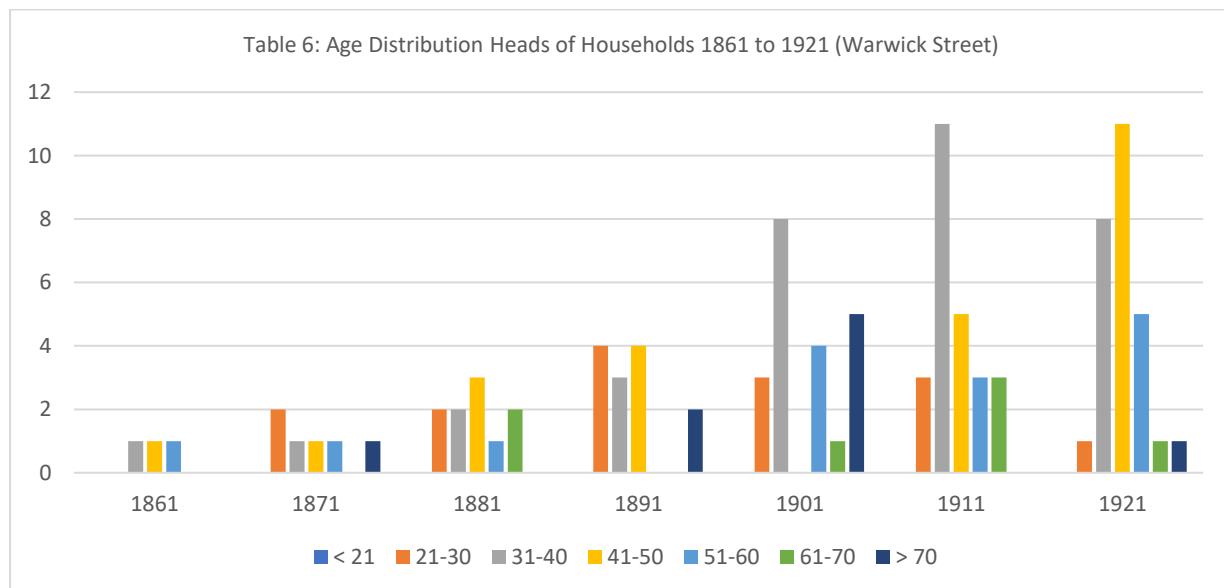


Table 7: Age Distribution of All Residents 1861 to 1921 (Warwick Street)

	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921
< 13	1	8	16	19	27	40	35
13-20	4	5	11	12	7	11	23
21-30	3	5	7	9	14	20	20
31-40	2	3	5	6	15	23	22
41-50	2	3	6	8	1	9	18
51-60	2	1	2	1	8	7	12
61-70			3	1	3	6	3
> 70				1	5	1	3
Total	14	25	50	57	80	117	136
Average	22	27	23	25	26	29	30

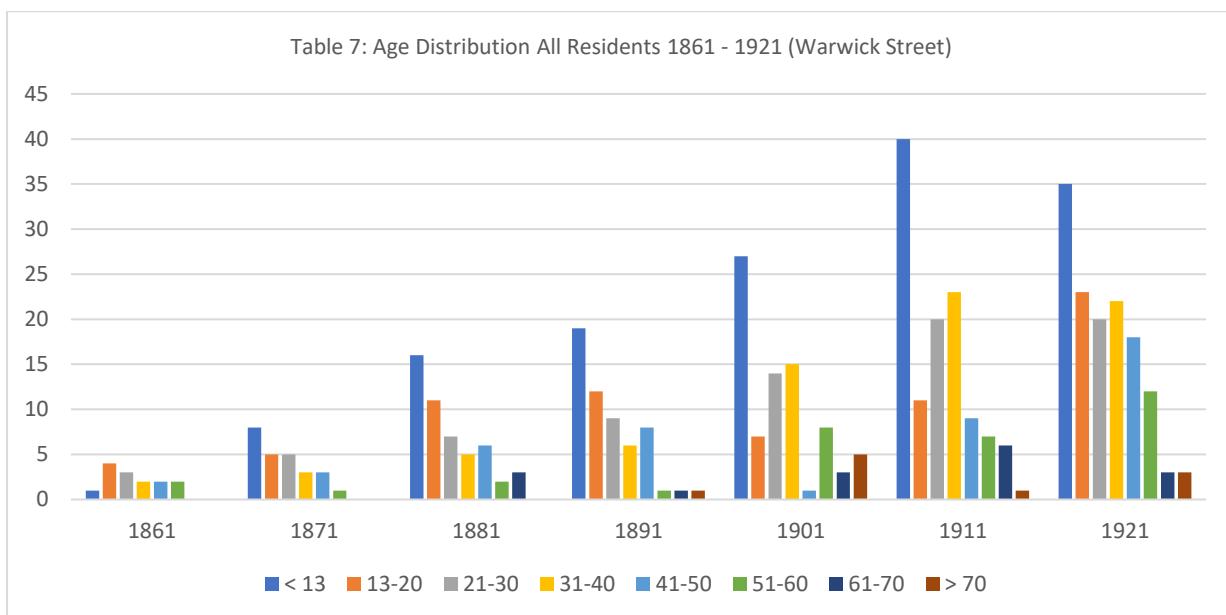


Table 8: Occupations Listed in Censuses for Working People 1861 to 1921 (Warwick Street)

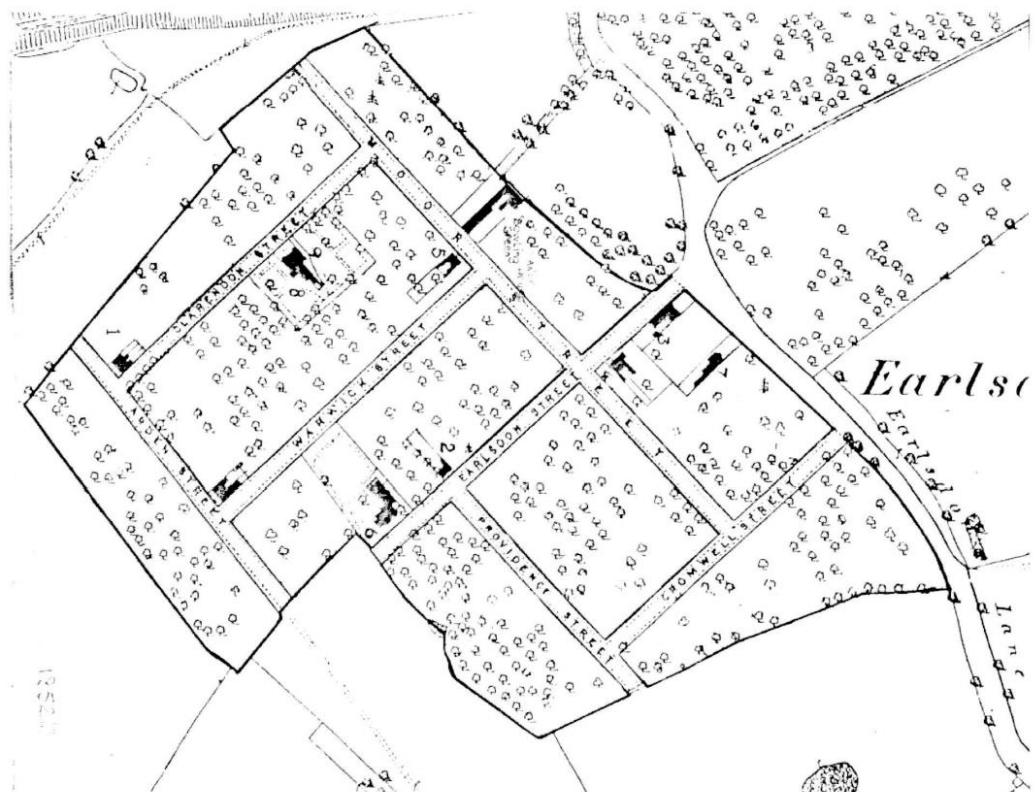
1861	
Ribbon weaving/silk filling 7	Watchmaking 4
1871	
Watchmaking 2 Servant 3 Licensed victualler 1	Police sergeant 1 Superannuated inland revenue officer 1

1881	
Watchmaking 12 Servant/nurse 3 Carpenter 1 Licensed victualler 1	Police constable 1 Stationmaster 1 Trimming carder 1
1891	
Living on own means 4 Railway 3 Watchmaking 3 Domestic servant 2 Licensed victualler & watch finisher 1 Retired licensed victualler 1 Blacksmith 1 Carpenter 1	Dressmaker employer 1 Gardener 1 Labourer 1 Laundress 1 Machinist 1 Professional cycle rider 1 Shop assistant 1 Weights & measures inspector 1
1901	
Watchmaking 6 Living on own means 4 Railway 4 Servant/nurse 4 Carpenter 2 Cycle manufacturing 2 Education 2	Boot and shoemaker 1 Clerk 1 Commercial traveller 1 Lay preacher 1 Publican 1 Retired farmer 1 Weights & measures inspector 1
1911	
Motor manufacture 8 Railway 7 Carpenter 3 Cycle manufacture 3 Mineral waters salesman 2 Motorcycle manufacture 2 Boot machinist 1 Carter -- coal merchant 1 Clerk 1 Commercial traveller 1 Engineering apprentice -- ordnance 1 Farm labourer 1	Fitter -- printers 1 Grocer's assistant 1 Licensed victualler 1 Machine tool maker 1 Music teacher 1 Piano tuner 1 Ribbon weaving 1 Servant 1 Tailor's cutter 1 Teacher 1 Watch examiner 1 Weights & measures inspector 1

1921	
Motor manufacture 21 Shop work 8 Toolmaking 6 Railway work 3 Chain-making 2 Post Office work 2 Servant 2 Book binder 1 Cashier 1 Clerk 1 Cycle manufacture 1	Dairyman 1 Electrician 1 Laundry vanman 1 Licensed victualler 1 Motorcycle manufacture 1 Paver 1 School teacher 1 Tailor's cutter 1 Typist 1 Watchmaking 1

APPENDIX 2 – MAPS

Map 1: Earlsdon 1852/53



Provided by Earlsdon Research Group

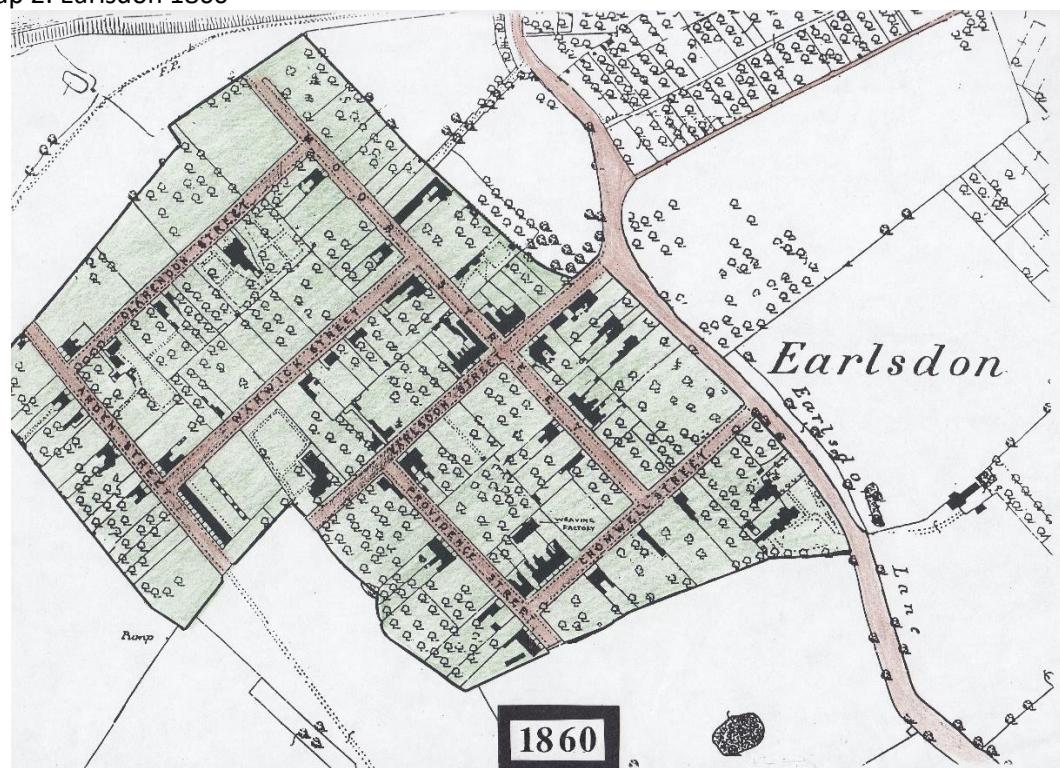
Warwick Street, Earlsdon 1861 to 1921

David Porter, Earlsdon Research Group

April 2024



Map 2: Earlsdon 1860



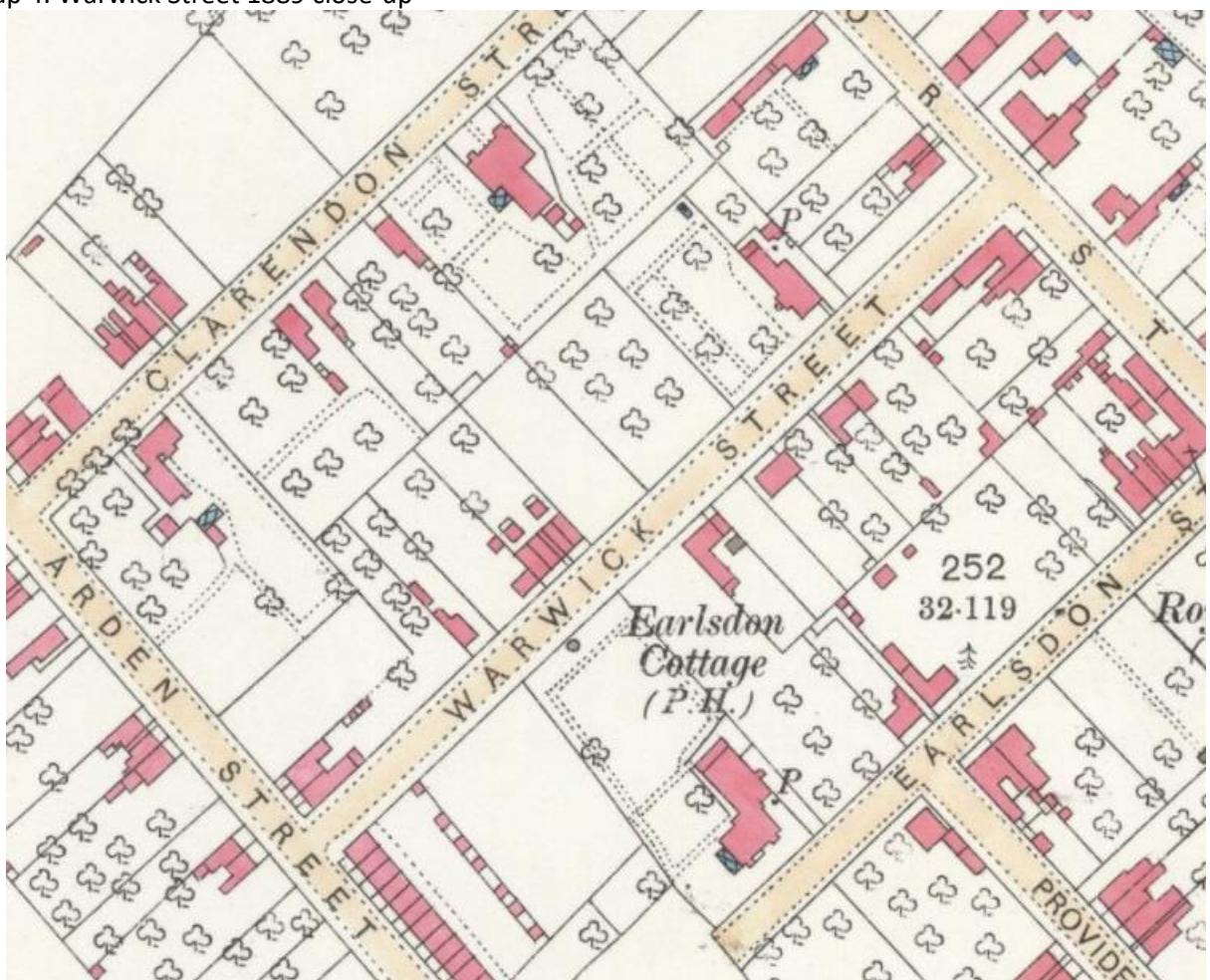
Provided by Earlsdon Research Group

Map 3: Earlsdon 1889



Provided by Earlsdon Research Group

Map 4: Warwick Street 1889 close-up



Provided by Earlsdon Research Group

Map 5: Warwick Street 1904



Provided by Earlsdon Research Group

Map 6: Coventry 1911, with Earlsdon lying to the south-west of the city



Reproduced from Dormer Harris, Mary (1911) *Story of Coventry*. London: J M Dent & Co

Map 7: Earlsdon 1913



Provided by Earlsdon Research Group

Map 8: Earlsdon 1925



Provided by Earlsdon Research Group

Published by earlsdonresearchgroup.org



APPENDIX 3 – IMAGES

Image 1



Warwick Street looking north-east in 1907, the wall on the right marking the end of the garden behind Earlsdon House with The Cottage being the first building beyond it; this photograph was provided by Earlsdon Research Group

Warwick Street, Earlsdon 1861 to 1921

David Porter, Earlsdon Research Group

April 2024



Image 2



Warwick Street looking north-east in April 2024, with a view much changed from the 1907 scene above – only the first five houses on the left from number 59 down to number 51 are much the same as before, with the Edwardian terrace on the right opposite the flats appearing for the first time in the street directory in 1909

Image 3



An Earlsdon Research Group photograph of 51 Warwick Street circa 1910, which with one sitting room downstairs and one bedroom upstairs was the smallest house on the estate according to the 1911 Census, prior to the addition of an extension at the back of the house shortly thereafter.

Image 4



51 Warwick Street in revised form as it appears in April 2024 – amongst other changes made during the intervening years, further to the addition of two more rooms upstairs and downstairs in 1911 at some point the downstairs window aperture has been widened and the front door moved to the right to accommodate this change, but the appearance of the upper elevation looks almost identical to that in the earlier image

Image 5



Since demolished, in the centre is 12 Warwick Street as photographed by Bill Dunn in 1984, the house which was erected in by the unfortunate Joseph Carver in 1853 making it one of the first houses in Earlsdon but now demolished – notice that the plot of land he also owned to the right had still not been built on, well over a century after his original purchase

Image 6



The rear of 12 Warwick Street, again captured by Bill Dunn in 1984, with the characteristic long window of Joseph Carver's watchmaking workshop visible above

Image 7



The view in April 2024 of Sovereign House at 12-14 Warwick Street, which together with access roads to the left and right sides now occupies the frontage of the two plots originally bought by Joseph Carver

Image 8



7 Warwick Street, known as Warwick House, from a photograph taken by Bill Dunn of the Earlsdon Research Group in 1978 -- at the rear of the house, it is possible to see the workshop with its separate entrance to allow access for watchmakers in the employ of the owner of the house

LOT 3.
EARLSDON.
A most desirable VILLA RESIDENCE, known as Warwick House, situate in Warwick-street, Earlsdon, lately occupied by the late Mr. R. H. Morley.

The Residence has an imposing elevation; it lies back from the road, is well finished, and fitted throughout, containing a spacious entrance hall laid with Minton tiles. There is also an open front staircase, and back stairs, large dining-room and drawing-room, kitchen fitted with range, scullery, china pantry, coal-house, &c., good cellar, four chambers, bath-room, closet and store-room; and adjoining, approached by a separate entrance, there is watch makers' shopping to seat twenty hands, private office, and a separate earth closet.

In the rear of the property is a Coach-house and Stable, with loft over, and a brick kennel.

There is also a good Kitchen Garden, well planted with fruit trees, a well laid out Lawn, surrounded by superior trees and shrubs.

The Property has an important frontage to the street, and contains an area of 2,004 square yards or thereabouts.

Further particulars may be had of Mr. OLIVER MINSTER, Solicitor, or of the AUCTIONEER, Coventry.

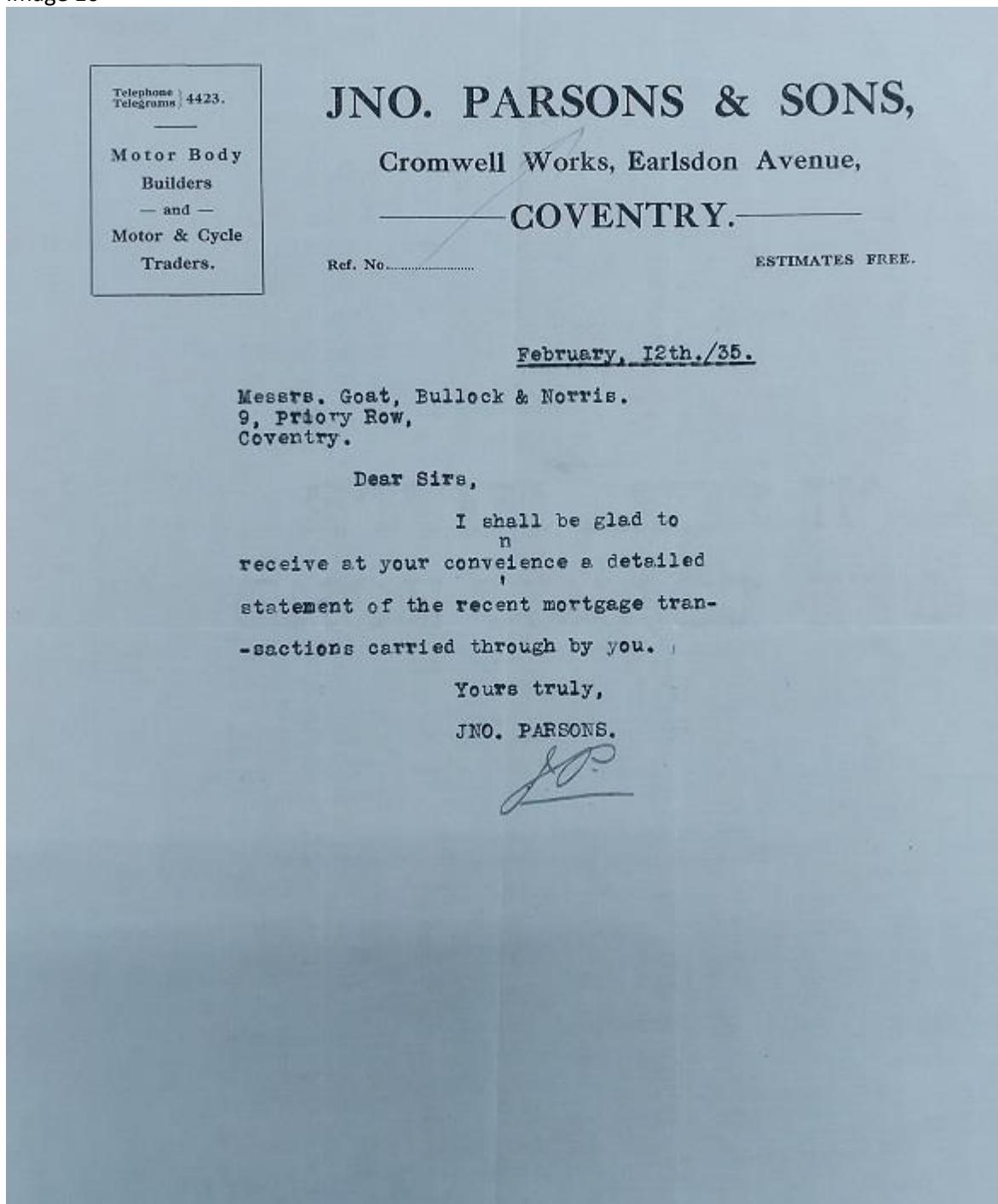
Auction notice for Warwick House appearing in the Coventry Herald on 5th November 1886

Image 9



7 Warwick Street in April 2024 – although the chimneys have gone and the workshop windows are no longer in place, the exterior of the house is little changed

Image 10



Letter dated 12th February 1935 on the letterhead of Jno Parsons & Sons at the Cromwell Works on Earlsdon Avenue [South], reproduced with permission from Coventry Archives & Research Centre ref PA704/39/51

Image 11



The Cottage Inn in 1911, with the then publican Tom Hands in shirtsleeves, from a photograph held by the Earlsdon Research Group

Image 12



The Cottage Inn in April 2024, with the extension to the left added in around 1912

Image 13



The factory buildings erected in the 1920s by Coventry Gauge and Tool Works, occupied subsequently between 1936 and 1965 by the Coventry Precision and Repetition Company

Image 14



The view down Warwick Street in April 2024, with Williamson Court – constructed in 2007 -- standing on the location of the Coventry Gauge and Tool factory site

A LARGE CATCH OF STRAY CATTLE.

There was something to be heard on Friday morning when seven owners of cattle were called up one by one. In each instance the facts were substantially the same. Police-constable Malins, early on the morning of the 12th inst., discovered the wandering cattle, fourteen of them, in Warwick Street, Earlsdon, and others in the same district. It was not a very serious offence, except that the wanderers had a liking for the flowers and vegetables growing in Earlsdon gardens, and their visits were not calculated to be of benefit to the owners of the gardens. There were some peculiar, as well as some valid, excuses. Most of the defendants were freemen, and turned their cattle upon Hearsall Common according to their right; but there was no boundary fence to prevent the beasts from straying upon other people's property. "Why don't the freemen's trustees see to the matter," one defendant wanted to know, "for what was the use of having a free-man's privileges if they were of no use?" The Bench could not answer this question; that did not concern them, so they fixed the penalties to meet the cases. Samuel Pettifer, Leicester Street, owned a stray horse, and as he had been summoned before 16s. was asked of him. Samuel, at least, relieved himself of a good grumble as well as his money. Charles Horton, Moat Street, had also been summoned before, but he assured the Bench it was impossible for him to be out of bed all night to see to the cattle. The Magistrates smiled and told him it would be 13s. 6d. this time. The regulation seven shilling expenses was taken from Charles Cooke, Craven Street, Enoch Ward, Spon Street, William Walker, Radford, and Wm. Whirmel, Spon End; but the latter deserves a separate dealing with.

THE PINNER'S CATTLE PUT IN THE POUND.

Now William Whirmel, who was amongst the batch of cattle owners mentioned above, had a grievance, and it was this. When Police-constable Malins ran the catt'e in to the pound he took them to Stivichall, and William, who was a duly authorised pinner under the Coventry Corporation, and had documents to show it, wanted to know why his own animals were not put in the Coventry pound. What did the constable want to take "those theer starks" out of St. Michael's parish to Stivichall for, "all across country like that?" So the constable explained that where the cattle were found was nearest to Stivichall. Still William was not satisfied, for wasn't he the authorised pinner for St. Michael's? The Bench gave him the benefit of paying expenses the same as "the rest," and the defendant, after regaining his documents, went to talk the matter over outside.

A Large Catch of Stray Cattle, (1889, 26 July). *Coventry Times*, p. 6

