

Graffiti
In The Old
Grammar School
Coventry



The Old Grammar School

Although it is known as the Old Grammar School, this wonderful building began life nearly one thousand years ago as the Church and Hospital of St John. Only fragments of its history remain, painting a fascinating picture of its journey through time.

In the Beginning

Founded by Prior Lawrence of St Mary's Benedictine Priory, the main religious institution in the city at the time, the original hospital on this site was built between 1154 and 1176.

The hospital was run by the Knights Hospitallers, a monastic order who provided medical care, originally to pilgrims who had made the journey to Jerusalem.

The Medieval Building

This current building dates from the 1300's and was built using beautiful local sandstone. It had its own chapel and was maintained by gifts and endowments from local benefactors. The hospital had around 24-30 beds for the sick and infirm of the city, as well as travellers who sought lodgings there.

At this point England was a very religious country and, as was usual for the time, men and women were kept strictly segregated. As the hospital provided care for the flesh, the chapel provided the equally important care for the soul.

The School

On 4th March 1545 the hospital was surrendered to King Henry VIII during the Dissolution of the Monasteries. A wealthy businessman named John Hales paid £400 for the building, on condition that he would found a free school bearing the King's name.

King Henry VIII School started life on 23rd July, 1545 in the nave of the Whitefriars Church and it remained there until 1558, when it moved to the Hospital site. Freemen of the Coventry Guilds could send their sons to the school for the princely sum of 12 pence per year.

In 1557 John Hales had 49 carved oak choir stalls moved from Whitefriars Monastery to the school, to be used as desks. Made in 1342, the stalls remain in the Old Grammar School to this day, bearing the names of generations of schoolboys and the marble runs the pupils carved into them.

On Saturday 17th August 1565 as part of her only visit to Coventry, Queen Elizabeth I was shown the Grammar School which was 'set up by her late father' and made a gift of money for its upkeep. In his will dated 17th December 1572, Hales left property and land to pay for "The maintenance of one perpetual Free-school within the City of Coventry".

City Improvements

In 1848 Hales Street was constructed, which resulted in major changes to the Hospital buildings, including the demolition of the Ushers' house and garden, and the south transept. In 1852 the west front was rebuilt in a more orthodox Gothic style that remains today. In 1885 King Henry VIII Grammar School moved to new, much larger premises on a new 13 acre site on Warwick Road, leaving the beautiful medieval building behind.

The Next Chapter

Over the years the Old Grammar School has been used as a Sunday School, hosted jumble sales, and was even struck by a bomb during the Second World War. It has now been revitalised as a unique part of the city's rich heritage by Culture Coventry and we are thrilled to be able to preserve it for future generations.

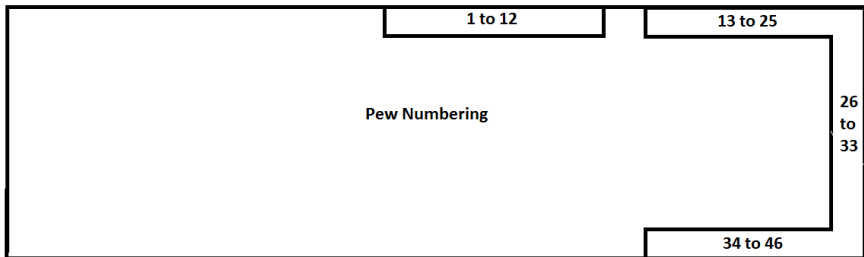
The Graffiti

We had the good fortune to use the Old Grammar School during the Heritage Open Days last year to present our family history society to the visitors.

Whilst we were manning the stall, we were attracted by the schoolboy graffiti and decided to photograph and record any decipherable names and dates.

The Pews

To enable others to view them in the future, we have arbitrarily numbered the pews, which are shown in the plan below. On the list of names, we have given the allocated pew number and some indications of position on the pew.



A general view of some of the pews.



Pew No.	Name	Date	Position	Comment
1	C(?) Dulliton	1750?		
1	G L Dulliton			
1	D Hales			
1	T Bott			
2	G Owen			
2	T Bishop			
3	T (or J) Smith		seat	
3	Crest'	1649	left side	
				crest but no name
4	E King			
5	J Boyce	1760?		
5	D. Hales		back	
6	T. Lynes		right side	
6	L Troughton		back	
6	G F T DAY (D is backwards? Could be CL)			
7	G H Grimshaw			
9	I North		Under seat	
9	M Sim (s)		back	
10	John Carr	1772	right side	
10	T Bott		Under seat	
11	T GUY (S)	179 (3?)		
11	I Ward		seat	
11	S Walton	1695		
11	C Overton			
12	R BALK			
13	Joe Smith		seat	
13	Braberry		back	
				The 'r' appears to be backwards
14	W Millar	16th October 1849		right side
14	I A RANN		back	
14	I Twain		Top right side	
14	H Caul		Right top	
15	S H BALE	1793	right side top	'His seat'
15	MATHEW			
15	Bags			
15	I Billman		all one word ?	
15/16	BRITE or BRILE			
16	H FOX		seat	
16	Rich		back	
16	John Ward		back	
16	John T Savage		back	
16	B M Wren (The 'B' may not belong to the carving)			
16	John Webb			
	John is above Webb and an I is before Webb?			
16	Blockberry(?)	1711		

Pew No.	Name	Date	Position	Comment
16	F BLACK			
16	F Lloyd		On bench in front	
17	S Simpson	1767	right side	
17	W Elliott	1.1859	left side	11.1 was this the age of the boy? is this January 1859?
17	I Remin			
17	A Woodward			
17/18	T Brookhill			
18	R King		Back left	
18/19	I Hicks (could be Hickling unfinished)			
19	S Simpson		Right top	
19	Rich Grimshaw		Right top	
19	Grimshaw	1740-1		
20	Villiers			
21	R Steane			
21	R Grimshall			
21	T Edwards			
21	T Shakespear			
21	W Belcher			
21	T Taylor	174?		
22	W B Russel			
22	John Nichols			
22	C Stuart	1763		
22	T Mitchell	1785		
22	C Sargea (nt?)			
22	H Fox		On bench in front	
23	Boyce			
23	George Secker	1739		
23	John Ash	1739		
23	W Miller			
23	R Richardson?			
24	A Jackson	1848		
24	Rich Parrott	1737		
24	B Toms			
24	F Greville			
25	C Elliott	1793		
25	R Parr			
25	I Nicholls	1738		
25	I Sutton	1780		
26	W Inge	1727		
26	Fr Parrott			
26	B Toms	1741		
26	Wm Bird			
27	J Edmo(nds?)			
27	W Broom			

Pew No.	Name	Date	Position	Comment
27	R Brown			
27	? Gravenor			
27	Richard ?			
27	W Brook			
28	Will Parker			
28	J H Bracegirdle			
28	W Langton			
29	Matt Bream		29 is really two pews	
29	James Powell	1764		
29	I Brown	1744		
29	Wm White	1737		
29	A Woodward			
29	John Ash	1738	In an ornate square frame	
30	F Richardson			
30	A Miln			
31	John Nichols			
31	I A Hicks	1772		
32	G Wright	1744		
32	W T Belcher			
33	Sam Daw			
34	P Smith			
34	S Parker	1772		
34	Rich Grimshaw	1741		
35	S Bird			
35	? Howell			
35	Ben Boyce	1739		
36	T Merry			
36	E Store	1846		
36	S Bird			
36	S Barker	1772		
36	Timothy Garl?			
36	John Sutt(on)			
36/37	J Dawes			
37	R V S L Worth			
37	William White			
37	Samuell Lea			
37	Edward Smith			
37	C E Ron			
37	James Hartlet			
37	J Sheepshanks			
38	R Bird	1739		
38	Rich Bird his seat	1739		
38	J J Soden			
38	M S Kowell			
39	F Blick			
40	I Iron			

Pew No.	Name	Date	Position	Comment
40	H Waite		On bench in front	
41	Turton			
41	A Wood		On bench in front	
41	A Wood		On back of bench in front	
42	W Odell	1851		
42	W Brookes	1745		
42	I Troughton			
43	T Merry	18??		
43	R L Piracy	1714		
43	T Flyn		On Bench in front	
45	T Hall ?			
45	Warave ?			
46	I Newcombe			

Benches in front of pews 34 to 46:

H fox
A Wood

Acknowledgements

The description and history of the Old Grammar School was extracted from a booklet printed by the City Development Directorate and is reproduced with their permission.

The graffiti was recorded by committee members of the Society. In addition, the carvings were photographed by Paul Salisbury.

Research into the selected individuals was carried out by Ella Johnson.

This booklet was designed by Andrew Walton.

If you discover a name in this booklet which is of interest to you, we may be able to email a digital copy of the photograph to you.

Photographs of the Graffiti

Below is a selection of photographs some of the more distinctive carvings.

This one is on pew 15 and says “S H Bale 1793 His Seat”



Mr Grimshaw appears on several pews! This is on pew 19. His name is enclosed in a frame with the year, 1741, inscribed in the four corners.



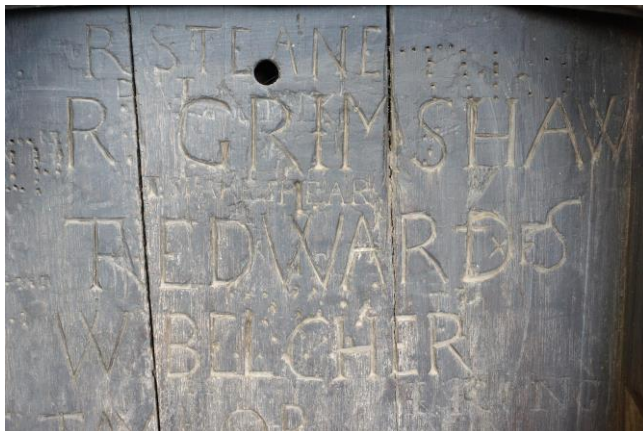
This is a particularly fine example on pew 23. This is one of the inscriptions where the letters I and J have been used interchangeably.



This is one he created a year earlier, on pew 29



Five decipherable names, R Steane, R Grimshaw, T Shakespear, T Edwards, W Belcher, in close proximity on pew 21.



This one on pew 37 is a work of art. How did they find the time to do it?



Other Information

The following entry was found in the 1851 Coventry Census, which may well be the W Odell 1851 in the inscription found on pew number 42. The father's occupation and the number of servants suggests wealth to send William to the Grammar School.

Forename	Surname	Rel.	Cond	Sex	Age	Occupation
Joseph	ODELL	Head	M	M	41	Rib. Mfr. Firm 2mastrs
Mary	ODELL	Wife	M	F	37	Mfrs Wife
William	ODELL	Son	U	M	13	Mfrs Son
Jos. Chas.	ODELL	Son	U	M	10	Scholar
James Geo.	ODELL	Son	U	M	8	Scholar
Richard	ODELL	Son	U	M	6	Scholar
Fanny Clara	ODELL	Daur	U	F	1	
Henrietta	LONG	Vist	U	F	26	Governess
Mary Ann	TAYLOR	Serv	U	F	28	House Servant
Mary	DEEMING	Serv	U	F	30	House Servant

This entry was also found in the 1851 Census and probably refers to the A Jackson carved into pew number 24 in 1848.

Forename	Surname	Rel.	Cond	Sex	Age	Occupation
Joseph	JACKSON	Head	M	M	43	Ribbon Weaver
Delilah	JACKSON	Wife	M	F	38	Ribbon Weaver
Ann	JACKSON	Daur		F	14	Ribbon Weaver
Albert	JACKSON	Son		M	13	Scholar
Waller	JACKSON	Son		M	3	
William	BROOKS	App	U	M	19	Ribbon Weaver
Ann	MUDDIMAN	Serv	U	F	22	
Jane	MUDDIMAN	Serv	U	F	18	



Coventry Family
History Society

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