

Coventry

Coventry is an ancient city which predates many of the large cities around it including Birmingham and Leicester. It is likely that Coventry grew from a settlement of the Bronze Age near the present-day city centre where Coventry's bowl shape and, at that time large flowing river and lakes, created the ideal settlement area, with mild weather and thick woods: food, water and shelter would have been easily provided. Coventry was developed in several steps started by Romans (AD 700), during the middle ages (1016, 1043 etc) up to today. In the 18th and 19th centuries Coventry became one of the three main British centers of watch and clock manufacture. As the industry declined, due mainly to competition from Swiss made clock and watch manufacturers, the skilled pool of workers proved crucial to the setting up of bicycle manufacture and eventually the motorbike, car, machine tool and aircraft industries. In the late 19th century, Coventry became a major centre of bicycle manufacture. By the early 20th century, bicycle manufacture had evolved into motor manufacture, and Coventry became a major centre of the British motor industry (Jaguar).

Coventry's motor industry boomed during the 1950s and 1960s and Coventry enjoyed a 'golden age'.

Coventry suffered severe bomb damage during World War II, most notoriously from a massive Luftwaffe air raid known as the "Coventry Blitz" on 14 November 1940.

Firebombing on this date led to severe damage to large areas of the city centre and to Coventry's historic cathedral, leaving only a shell and the spire. More than 4,000 houses were damaged or destroyed, along with around three-quarters of the city's industrial plants. More than 800 people were killed, with thousands injured and homeless. The Germans coined the term "Coventrate" to describe the tactics of complete urban devastation developed for the raid. Aside from London, Hull and Plymouth, Coventry suffered more damage than any other British city during the Luftwaffe attacks, with huge firestorms devastating most of the city centre. The city was probably targeted due to its high concentration of armaments, munitions, aircraft and aero-engine plants which contributed greatly to the British war effort, although there have been claims that Hitler launched the attack as revenge for the bombing of Munich by the RAF six days before the Coventry Blitz and chose the Midlands city because its medieval heart was regarded as one of the finest in Britain. Following the raids, the majority of Coventry's historic buildings could not be saved as they were in ruinous states or were deemed unsafe for any future use, although several were later demolished simply to make way for modern developments which saw the city centre's buildings and road infrastructure almost completely altered by 1970.

The city was bombed many times during the Second World War by the Luftwaffe. Second World War bombs were often abandoned if they fell in areas of little significant importance to the war effort and continue to be found during construction work to this day. Many old bombs have been found to still be viable explosive devices.

On 12 March 2008 an unexploded World War II Luftwaffe bomb was discovered at 12 noon. It was found at the Belgrade Plaza development in Upper Well Street in Coventry's city centre. Police said the device seemed genuine but it was not clear if it was live. A controlled explosion was conducted at approximately 02:40 GMT on the morning of 13 March.