



## Charterhouse opens as city's latest heritage attraction

THE restored remains of a former Carthusian monastery in Coventry, Charterhouse, opened to the public this month after years of work by Historic Coventry Trust and significant funding of around £10 million from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic England and other sources.

"The original monastery, the Priory of St Anne, was built of local sandstone between 1381 and 1410," explains the Trust. "The site included a church, the Great Cloister surrounded by twelve individual monks' cells, and the Prior's Cell and refectory, now the main building known as the Prior's House.

"Near the Prior's House was probably a guest house, bakery, brewery, kiln house and granaries. Each monk lived in a self-contained cell, a two-storey dwelling within a small walled garden. Remains of these cells, and of the church, have been discovered through archaeological excavation on site."

The peaceful life of these Coventry monks came to an end in the 16<sup>th</sup> century with the dissolution of the monasteries, under orders of King Henry VIII. Many of the buildings were demolished but the Prior's House and precinct walls remained, becoming a private house which passed through the ownership of several families over the years.

From 1848, Charterhouse was owned by the Wyley family, who were pharmacists, surgeons and entrepreneurs in Coventry. In 1889 the property was inherited by Colonel Sir William Wyley, also a chemist, who converted the Prior's House into a fine Victorian home.

Colonel Wyley died in 1940 and he left Charterhouse and much of the surrounding land to the people of Coventry. It was used for a variety of purposes but its future was secured as a heritage attraction when it came under the control of Historic Coventry Trust, which has made the former monastery the centrepiece of Charterhouse Heritage Park.

● For the full story and visitor details, see the Trust's website.

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***Our group visit to Charterhouse will take place on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> May, starting at 2pm. Further details will be mailed out when arrangements are finalised. Please put the date in your diary!***

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## A gift from Carnegie: Dippy the Dinosaur

**HUNDREDS of children (and adults) have flocked to Coventry over the last few months to see Dippy the Dinosaur at the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum.**

But did you know that this famous replica of a dinosaur, formerly housed at the National History Museum in London, has a direct connection with Andrew Carnegie, the celebrated philanthropist who – as we saw last month - gave three public libraries to Coventry?

Dippy, on loan at the Herbert until 2026, is an exact replica of a real dinosaur, the fossilised bones of which were discovered by railroad workers in Wyoming, USA, in 1899. Subsequent excavations were funded by Andrew Carnegie, who acquired the bones as a centrepiece for his new museum in Pittsburgh - the Carnegie Museum of Natural History.

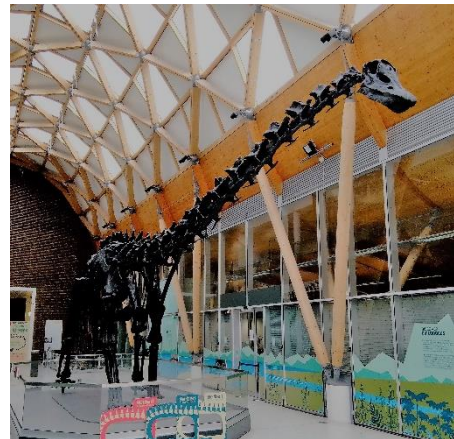
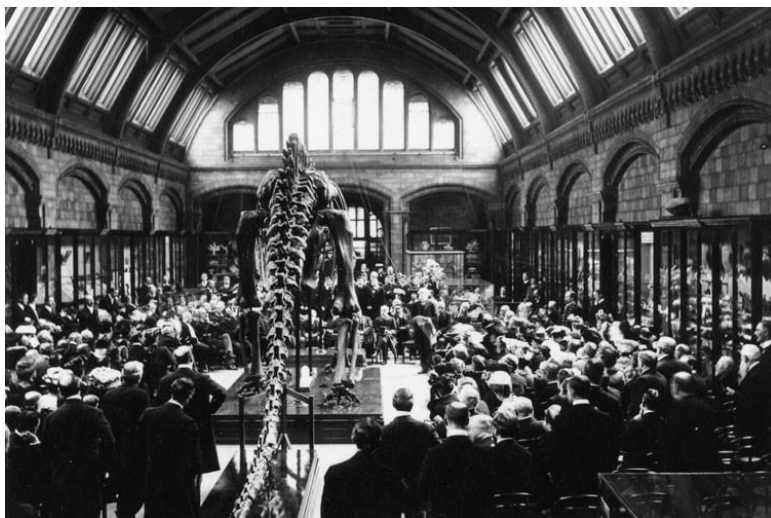


Photo: John Marshall

We are told that during the reconstruction of the skeleton at the Carnegie Museum, experts discovered subtle differences from the two other *Diplodocus* species known at the time, *Diplodocus longus* and *Diplodocus lacustris*. The new species was therefore named *Diplodocus carnegii*, in honour of Andrew Carnegie.



Dippy was unveiled at a lavish ceremony in 1905 Photo: Natural History Museum

The story goes that King Edward VII saw a sketch of the *Diplodocus* while visiting Carnegie at his Scottish castle and remarked how much he would like a similar specimen for the Natural History Museum. Carnegie obliged by commissioning a giant replica cast of his dinosaur and gifting it to London.

The 292-bone skeleton, nicknamed Dippy, caused a sensation when it first arrived in the UK. It was unveiled to the public in a lavish ceremony for 300 people, on 12 May 1905, and for many years was the first thing seen by visitors when they entered the London museum.

After more than 110 years on display in London, the Natural History Museum announced that Dippy would be going on a tour of the UK. Conservators spent 12 months preparing the delicate plaster-of-Paris cast for its journey, and it was seen by over two million visitors during its whirlwind tour. But Dippy is now taking a rest at the Herbert Art Gallery in Coventry – where it will stay on loan for three years. Entry to the museum is free, though booking is advised.

*Diplodocus* were giant dinosaurs, like the brontosaurus, and were some of the largest creatures to exist at the time. They were first described as a new type of dinosaur in 1878 by Professor Othniel C Marsh at Yale University. The species lived sometime between 145 and 156 million years ago and belong to a group called sauropods, meaning 'lizard feet'.

• Information sourced largely from the Natural History Museum. For interesting additional reading, see article 'Andrew Carnegie's dinosaur diplomacy continues to inspire', available on the website of the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Last month's newsletter gave an account of Carnegie's visit to Coventry in 1914.

# From village ale house to suburban Rose and Crown

THE current Rose and Crown pub on Walsgrave Road, situated on the corner of Church Lane, has been in existence since 1926 but its predecessor goes back to 1868 when it was a very different building known simply as The Beerhouse.



Photo: John Marshall

In the nineteenth century this part of Walsgrave Road was usually referred to as Church End, to signify the end of the road to St Michael's Church, but these days the area is more commonly known as The Forum, a reference to the art deco cinema that once existed nearby. Apart from the church itself, Church End was once



The original Rose and Crown at Church End is signposted next to the white building on the right, pictured in 1912. Opposite is a row of top shops.

dominated by several top shop weavers' houses, a few workers' cottages, and an old-fashioned ale house.

The Beerhouse was probably a domestic dwelling or farm house that began to sell beer and it seems to have existed from 1868 to 1876, when it changed its name to the Rose and Crown. It occupied a site, not on the current plot but on the other side of Church Lane, where a row of shops now stands.

The first known landlord was Richard Kimberley but by 1919 the pub was in

the hands of Walter Cramp, who, according to Fred Lockett, a Coventry pub historian, ran the house with a rod of iron and refused to admit women. In those days, says Lockett, it was a village local, nicknamed 'Crampy's'.

The application to build a new pub on the site was first made in 1919 but there was some hesitation on the part of the Justices because of the proximity of other pubs like The Old Ball, the Bull's Head, the New Inn and the Red Horse. But permission was eventually granted and in 1926 a new pub opened nearby, on the other corner of Church Lane. The stern Walter Cramp, who had formerly been in charge of the old pub, continued as the landlord of the new building until 1940.



The current Rose and Crown is shown here in 1935, set back from the road. The old top shops, opposite, were still in existence at this time Photos: courtesy David Fry

● With thanks to Fred Lockett's book 'Coventry Pubs' (2018) and the excellent pub history site of [historiccoveentry.co.uk](http://historiccoveentry.co.uk)

# Plaudits for 1960s station

THE modernist architecture of Coventry's railway station was recently celebrated in an absorbing episode of the hugely impressive television series, *The Architecture the Railways Built*.

The series, presented by the amiable railway enthusiast Tim Dunn, examines the history of railway architecture and it features numerous stations, bridges, signal boxes, tunnels and railway paraphernalia. Included in the latest series is the stunning Forth Bridge in



Photo: John Marshall



Photo: Yesterday/UK TV

Scotland, the Castlefield Viaduct in Manchester, the construction of the Channel Tunnel, the story of Folkstone Harbour Station, and a look at the mighty Knaresborough Viaduct in Yorkshire.

Also included in the latest series is the funicular railway in Scarborough and, perhaps unexpectedly, a visit to Coventry, where the modernist design of the station is sometimes unappreciated by railway cognoscenti. But Tim Dunn is suitably enthralled by the sleek lines of the 1960s station, with its expansive concourse and distinctive white tiles, large glass panels, wooden balustrades and extravagant timber ceiling. He even gets to meet the station's architect, Derrick Shorten, now 96 years old, who explains that he had a free hand in 1959 when asked to design a new station in time for the consecration of Coventry Cathedral in 1962. The programme also features a brief tour around the station with Catherine Croft, from the Twentieth Century Society, who shares Tim Dunn's admiration.

The series is broadcast on the Yesterday channel and the Coventry programme (series 4, episode 5) can be viewed on demand at UK TV Play.



Photo: warwickshirerailways.com

**THIS view (left) shows the old Coventry Station in the Edwardian period. It was first built in 1838 but replaced two years later with a larger station. Extensive alterations and enlargement took place in later years but the station was always too small and cramped. This picture shows an open top tram, horse drawn vehicles, and a number of boys carrying newsagent bags, suggesting they were waiting for papers for delivery.**