LOCAL NOMENCLATURE. THE ORIGIN OF THE NAMES OF THE STREETS, LANES, AND OTHER LOCALITIES IN COVENTRY.

It has frequently occurred to me to be an interesting subject of study, to search out the origin of our street nomenclature, and endeavour to account for the apparent inconsistencies that exhibit themselves between the name and condition of many of our localities. Another feature that presents itself to me is that many of our local designations are peculiar, as may be said of other ancient towns, that is, they are not to be found in common use in other places. In York the term "gate" is commonly used for street, to distinguish thoroughfares where no gate could possibly have been, indeed nearly all the streets are gates here, having different prefixes; this may have arisen from the northern use of gate for road, the proverb being, "gang yer ain gate," commonly enough. In Edinburgh we have the Wynds. In Newcastle the Sides; fashionable resorts abound in Squares, Crescents, Quadrants, Circles and Parades; hilly districts are adverted to in the towns sprinkled about them, Cliffs, Hills, and Views being common terms, while sea-side towns present specimens of the Pier the Quay or the Esplanade. So much for generalities, now for particulars. Sheffield has its Fargate, Oxford its Turl, Cambridge its Petty Cury, London its Holborne, Hereford its High Town, Leicester the Holy Bones, Northampton has Marefair, Drapery, and both Gold and Silver Streets, rare money making places I presume; and at Shrewsbury we have the Mardol, Wyle Cop, and other curious names, and every place of any note has a nomenclature especially its own, and not to be found commonly elsewhere. Now these peculiarities of distinction had their origin in peculiar circumstances, some of which are too obscure to be traced with certainty, or had their name conferred on them at too remote a period for us to associate a cause for their being so called. Such has been the case at Coventry, and while we can with some few advance only probable conjectures, with the greater majority we shall be able to give a reasonable account, and proving thereby the fact, that even the streets and lanes of our good old City bear upon them in their names the impress of local history, which ought to prevent our ever becoming totally ignorant of our City's chronicles. In olden times it was the fashion to perpetuate the memory of noble deeds and great principles. We shall see this fact particularly illustrated in our perambulations of Coventry, as we may observe that the more ancient thoroughfares bear reference mostly to either physical peculiarities, or historical circumstances, while our modern streets seem designed to perpetuate the names of persons, who but for this would soon be forgotten, save and

except those charitable individuals whose deeds claim perpetual remembrance.

To begin with the name of the city itself, the origin of the word Coventry is circumstantial, and allusive to the monastic or conventual establishments for which this city was early remarkable. Dugdale says the etymology of the name is doubtful, but considers that the first part may be derived from Convent; the latter syllable "tre" being undoubtedly British, and signifying a villa, rendered also as a small house, farm, or country residence: it is analagous also to village or small township, and it is certain that Coventry was not of great importance in Roman times, hence if a British village, it continued as such, and only emerged from its insignificance under Saxon auspices. Some ancient authors give the stream that runs through the city the name of the "Cune or Coven," and attempt to establish the derivation of the name on these considerations: and if such was ever the name of the river, the conclusion is probable that our old town was a village on the Coven, hence Coventre. Camden however says that it was anciently written "Conventria." It has lately been suggested that the proper derivation is Cov-an-tigh, the dwelling of the holy women—but it must be remembered that at the time it was the habitation of the Nuns expelled by Edric it was known as Coventre, which with only slight variations has been retained to the present day, and in no case do we find any resemblance to the suggested termination "tigh," which I cannot but regard as an idea somewhat far-fetched, opposed as it is by a succession of good authorities and evidences in support of the generally accepted theory.

In order to take a systematic view of the subject I will treat it in a perambulatory form, making my remarks by the way as is the custom with pedestrians. And we will commence in the middle. Broadgate really extends from the north-west corner of High Street down to the entrance to the Butcher Row; this part presents a very different appearance to what it did previous to 1820; in that year the houses that formed a continuation of the north side of Smithford Street and returned down towards the Cross, leaving only a narrow street where now we have this fine open space, all these houses were removed, so that we have only one side of Broadgate remaining, the name of which is derived from its having been the approach from the city to the Castle of Cheylesmore. We will turn down Warwick Lane, which was formerly the main approach to the city on this side. Turning out of this narrow street we find Greyfriars' Lane (formerly known as Chilesmore Lane, from its leading from the city to the Old Manor House), which is so called from standing on part of the site of the Greyfriars' Monastery, the spire of which is still standing, and is attached to Christ Church. Union Street is comparatively a new street, also built on part of the site of the conventual precincts

and partly on the castle site. Union here implies continuation or connexion of the old series of streets about here with the new Hertford approaches; this street was laid out in the same year, 1820. Here is the entrance to Cheylesmore, or rather what is left of it. Stowe informs us that this manor was formerly written Chilesmore, and was a nursery for the Earl of Chester's children; who knows then but the progeny of Leofric, Lupus, or Kevelioc have here enjoyed their infantine sports and been trained to the hardy and rough recreation that heralded in the study of chivalry. An ancient archway, said to be the entrance to the Tiltyard, with masses of walls built in to the neighbouring houses are all that remain of the Manor House of the Lords of Cheylesmore, where, if the king prospective enjoyed his own, would now be the patrimony of the Prince of Wales as it was of his glorious ancestor, who in regal state, when known as Edward the Black Prince, kept house here: a turn to the left, and by the remains of the city wall and old Cheylesmore gate, one side of which only is left, and we are in the park, so called. In the last century this was veritably a park to all intents and purposes; a people's park, too, which the citizens held in fee farm, as, by a charter engraved on a brass plate in S. Mary's Hall, may still be seen. However, the last Prince of Wales sold this manor, and with it the park, to the Marquis of Hertford, so the park, with all its beautiful trees, was destroyed, and the citizens lost a privilege for the want of looking after, which had been granted to them by the Duke of Northumberland, and subsequently confirmed by his son, Robert, Earl of Leicester, in the tenth year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth. This park was distinguished by the terms great and little parks; the former was laid out in 1278, under the auspices of the monks, from which the little park was separated in 1388, the line of severance commencing at the Stone Gate and passing by the Hollow. Here then we find the origin of Little and Much Park Streets, much being the equivalent for great; in fact, it was originally known by the latter term, and there are numerous documents in the city muniment room referring to property in Great Park Street. Quinton Pool, in the park, probably derived its name from the game of Water Quintain, a popular pastime in the middle ages, for which this sheet of water would be well adapted. In the vicinity of Much Park Street stood the monastery of the Carmelites, or White Friars; the latter term gives the name to the ancient approach to the precincts by White Friars' Lane archway, the communication between the monastery and the city. White Friars' Street (formerly known by the name of Bachelor's Walk), is actually built close to the site, the back of the houses on the eastern side nearly extending to the west wall of the cloisters, the foundation of which has been recently laid open to view during the late alterations. A fine gatehouse on

this line is still in existence. The Charter House, formerly a monastery of the Carthusians, now a private residence, gives name to the lays or meadows adjacent; the term is common to the houses of this order, and originated from Carthuse, from whence they came into England. The Brick-kiln is sufficiently indicative of its origin, but the mill claims more ancient associations; the old dam here supplied the mill of the White Friars' hard by, as a similar reservoir near the Charter House served a similar purpose for the Carthusians. The origin of Shut Lane mill, then, is to be referred to a date anterior to power looms, and to a very different object. A pleasant field road takes us to Gosford Green. King's Fields doubtlessly derive their name from the fact of Richard the Second's tent having been pitched here when the lists for the trial by combat between the Dukes of Hereford and Norfolk were fixed, in 1397. It is said that his tent stood on the site of the Ball Inn. Turning down Gosford Street then, we can easily understand why this is called Far Gosford, as it is thereby distinguished from the city Gosford Street. Gosford evidently arises from the ford or passage of the river, and was doubtless a veritable ford long before either bridge or walls existed; the prefix Gos I assume to have been derived from "Gos," Ang. Sax. for Goose, or Gooseford. This bridge was anciently called Dover Bridge, and the short street that connects it with the Gosford Street was known as Calais Street; at the city end of it was the gate. The origin of these terms may be traced to the stirring times of Edward III., when Dover and Calais played such a prominent part, and we can easily conceive their being so named in compliment to the Black Prince. Shut Lane derives its name from the times of the Roses, Edward IV. having been refused entrance here when he summoned the city to open her gates to him, in 1470. A similar repulse to the unfortunate Charles I. gives the name additional significance. Jordan Well is associated with the name of Jordan Shepey, who caused the well here to be made in 1349. Such works, when no public body provided the necessary supply, deserve commemoration. Mill Lane, as it was formerly called, derived its title from a mill which formerly stood at the lower end, outside the gate, and was called Earle's Mill to distinguish it from the Priory Mill, which stood west of it. The stagnant dam and tumble down mill with floodgates that made this spot a disgrace to our city, have all disappeared; a new town has sprung up on the Spittlemoor, a term derived from the Bastile or Spittal which stood on or near the spot where the Dye-house is now, in the Alley Field, and just inside the walls. Cox Street continuation occupies the site of the narrow foot-way and rippling brook that ran beside it, overshadowed with trees, and close to which were two noted springs, the one nearest the city being called Hob's Hole, and giving the name of Spring Gardens, which they still retain. Hob's Hole will be well remembered

by those who assisted in chairing the King of Hob's Hole, as he was called, in the days of Jeffrey and Barlow election notoriety. Mill Lane gate was also called the Bastile gate from its vicinity to that edifice, which was a sort of refuge for the sick and aged poor. The Earl's Mill indicates its possessor, as it stood on that portion of the city which Earl Keveliock reserved for his own purposes after granting to the prior and monks the north and western parts for the benefit of the priory. New Street is so named from its erection for the accommodation of the workmen engaged in the erection of St. Michael's Church. Its present antiquated appearance justifies anything but its appellation, though it might have been new about the time when St. Michael's Church was built. Opposite the end of New Street, on the other side of Mill Lane, was a small lane called Corpus Christi. This was associated with the celebrated plays or mysteries for which Coventry was at one time famous. Adjacent were the places in which were kept the paraphernalia required for exhibition—stages on wheels, scenery, and other property. At the bend of Much Park Street we can just discern the end of St. John's Street, whose former appellation is owing to the pestilence that raged so furiously in that neighbourhood; this street was known in consequence as Dead Lane. Bayley Lane is associated with the memory of Mrs. Catherine Bayley, whose school was originally established in an old house adjoining the old Drapers' Hall, before these buildings were removed to make room for the new Drapers' Hall, on the site of the Drapery, as it was anciently called. Bayley Lane, however, owes the origin of its name to distinct and remote circumstances. Bailey was a place in which law breakers or peace invaders were placed in custody, a sort of Watch-house in fact, the charge of which was entrusted to a bailiff. The Old Bailey or Jail stood on the north side of Bayley Lane, where the present jail-keeper's house stands, and was in such a condition when Howard visited it as to excite that philanthropic man with considerable indignation, though he met with worse cases elsewhere. Bayley Lane is still associated with the administration of justice, the new Police Courts having been erected on the south side adjoining St. Mary's Hall.

Earl Street is attributable to the same origin as before alluded to—the Earldom. Out of it runs a new street, St. Mary's, appropriately named from its vicinity to the Hall, but it will for many years continue to be called by some the Halfmoon Yard from the old Inn that formerly stood here. Palace Yard does not appear to date back farther than the latter part of the seventeenth century, and appears to have been entitled to this distinction from its having been on several occasions honoured by the presence of Royalty, while inhabited by the family of the Hopkins's. On the first occasion in 1605, the Princess Elizabeth, afterwards Queen of

Bohemia, stayed a night here. In 1687, James II. was entertained here. In 1688, Princess Ann of Denmark came to Coventry for security, and lodged in this house; and in 1690, Prince George of Denmark stayed here. High Street in most towns indicates the principal commercial and trading place, where we expect to find the most attractive display of merchandise; the vicinity of Hay Lane would seem also to suggest the presence of a Hay-market or common resort of such as dealt in this commodity. Peeping Tom is not at home where he is now; we must fancy him looking out of an old timber framed mediæval house, situated at the corner of Greyfriars' Lane, which belonged to Alderman Owen. In 1715, this house was removed, and Peeping Tom's residence was changed to the house next to the King's Head, which on the laying out of Hertford Street in 1813, became the corner house—the present abode of this inquisitive gentleman is entirely out of character. The Cross is so called from the beautiful structure of Gothic design, enriched with statuary, gold, and colours, that formerly stood here, having been erected in the place of an older one; this Cross was completed in 1544, and stood near the old Mayor's Parlour, now used as Liquor Vaults. The word "Cheaping," added to the name Cross, is derived from the Anglo-Saxon "Ceap," a place of merchandise or sale. Thus we have Cheapside in London, which is analagous to our Cross Cheaping. The narrow communication between it and the top of the Butchery was anciently called the "Spicerstoke." This I cannot account for. Between here and Derby Lane was a narrow passage known as Pope's Head Alley, from a public-house adjoining the Derby Lane end of it. The Butchery, as it was originally termed, distinguished as Great and Little Butcher Rows, we may easily understand to have been the meat market of the city; there is a goodly supply of animal provision still to be met with in and near to it. Out of it we enter Priory Row, so called from this row of houses having been built on the remains of the Priory Church. A range of cellaring used by Mr. Collins as his wine vaults contains considerable fragments of the ancient walling. Hill Top did not exist as a thoroughfare until after the destruction of the monastery; it is appropriately named however, but a walk down the new Priory Street (another reminiscence of the convent) is far more pleasant. The Priory precincts were formerly known as Hill Close. The Bull Ring, at the bottom of the Great Butcher Row, is strongly suggestive of the kind of sport that obtained favour in the good old days, when even the dignitaries of the priory, whose western entrance looked straight on the scene, could sanction such cruel recreations. They drove a good trade by it, no doubt. New Buildings occupies the site of part of the Monastic Buildings, and was doubtlessly laid out on the suppression of the rebellion, houses being then scarce. The lower end of the Bull Ring was not

apparently occupied by building before this era, as in Dugdale I find that the ground between here and the river was then called West Orchard, whether by mistake or not I cannot say; that part known by us as such is certainly not designated by him as West Orchard; the term however is easily understood, meaning the orchard lying west of the Priory, to which it belonged. Maxtoke Lane was a thoroughfare leading from West Orchard through Bancroft Lane to Cross Cheaping, opposite Ironmonger Row. At the bottom of the Great Butchery (which I may here observe was also called the Poultry), we turn into Ironmonger Row, which now includes both sides of the short street; the north side however, from Palmer Lane right round to the Burges, was once known as Potter's Row. Palmer Lane was the frequent resort of the pilgrims, and was anciently called Marechal Lane. The Pilgrims' Rest that stood at the top was erected in the year 1479; the present inn stands on its site. Burges is a term derived from the situation between the two bridges that cross the street, the south one near the Lancasterian Yard (so called from the Lancasterian School formerly held here), and St. John's Bridge, near St. John's Hospital, now the Free School, the river being built over. Well Street derives its name from the broad well sunk here in 1333. Bishop Street, Rood Lane, Chauntry Place, and others, are all traceable to the rule of the ecclesiastical period, while St. Nicholas Street and Place indicate the vicinity of that long ago destroyed church. Hale Street, Ford, Jesson, White, Cox, Bond, and other new Streets, are appropriately named to preserve the memory of our city's benefactors. Swanswell was a pool outside the walls where the monks preserved their fish; no doubt they considered swans added to its beauty, hence its name. Speed, in his account of Warwickshire, tells us a story which is suggestive of a very different origin for the name. He says: "At Gosferd Gate in the east hangeth the shield bone of a wild boar, far bigger than the greatest oxebone; with whose snout the great pit called Swanswell (Swineswell) was tvrned up, and was slaine by the famous Guy, if we will beleeue report." The pig market was formerly held at the end of Silver Street; a cross stood here called Swine Cross, a much more pleasant name. A cross also stood at Hill Cross, hence the term. In fact there were formerly in the city and its immediate neighbourhood no less than eleven crosses. Bond Street is still called by some the Town Wall, and within my memory retained traces of its ancient condition, fragments of wall and an unwholesome ditch running its whole length; the old Workhouse stood on its southern side, and the yard entering from Hill Street is still known by the name. Hill Street led as now on to Windmill Hill. Barr's Hill may be attributable to the defensive works or bars without Bishop Gate, placed here during the civil wars, similar gates being added at the ends of Far Gosford and

Spon Streets; and on the other side of the city, Primrose Hill gave name to the fields now covered with a busy population. Smithford denotes a ford at Ram Bridge. Spon indicates the span or distance between this ford and Spon End ford or bridge, hence Spon Street. Spon Nocket was in the immediate vicinity of Spon End. The Conduit Yard indicates its own origin, one of the city fountains supplied from the old conduit being here. Fleet Street I cannot explain in this case. Vicar Lane has been known both as Archdeacon's Lane and Hound's Lane. Hertford Street, Place, and Terrace are, of course, complimentary to the Marquis, needlessly so. Bull Yard, the back way to the barracks, was the entrance to the ancient hostelry, the Bull; the barracks occupies the entire site; this was a very famous and historically celebrated inn. The Butts was formerly an open ground for the practice of archery, and was so called from the heaps of peat set up as marks for the archers to try their skill. The western end was known as the Somerlesne Butts as early as 1467. Similar facilities were afforded for the archers on the west side of the city, the association being still retained in the term Barker Butts Lane. To the north we find Moat Street, built on the site of an old house known as Crow Moat. I have left all proprietary and district roads leading to the neighbourhood out of my present notice, as conveying their own signification. I have simply endeavoured to trace the origin of our most noticeable or peculiar thoroughfares, and have also alluded to the transformation they have undergone. Where we can only conjecture I am as likely to be right as anyone, and I do not think I am in any case far wrong. But one thing I have endeavoured to demonstrate—that there is much to amuse and instruct in the mere names of the highways and byeways of our ancient city.

The usual vote of thanks closed the meeting.

THE EXCURSION.

July 23rd.

A numerous party visited Kenilworth, Guy's Cliff, Warwick Castle, Warwick, and Stoneleigh. A very enjoyable excursion was made, and all present were much pleased with the kindly attention shown to them at the various places of attraction.

July 28th, 1873.

The Rev. J. H. Hill, F.S.A., in the chair.

Mr. Henry Sharpe Jones, of Leicester, was elected a member.

The Chairman laid upon the table a Map of Dorsetshire, upon which was marked the Celtic, Roman, Saxon, and Danish vestiges