Wildlife

Priory Park is a haven for wildlife. The sound of the Woodpecker can be heard during spring and summer and you may see majestic Buzzards, which nest in the park, circling in the sky overhead. If you are lucky, you may see a small deer called a muntjac. They tend to be very shy around humans and will run away. There are many rabbits and their burrows are found in numerous locations. At dusk, look out for the nocturnal residents of Priory Park, Tawny Owls and red foxes hunt while pipistrelle and noctule bats flit around the night sky.

To help our wildlife, there are 23 bird boxes, three bat boxes and one Tawny Owl box in Priory Park.

Trees

A – Horse chestnut
(B – Common beech
C – Sweet chestnut
D – False acacia
E – Common oak
F – Common walnut
G – Tulip tree

Introduction

Priory Park has a fascinating history. Find out about:
• an unexpected royal visitor
• which famous artists have visited
• the whereabouts of The Priory
• interesting plants and trees

Thanks to:
• Diane James “Prayer & Passion” 2001
• The Yale Center for British Art for Canaletto image
• Warwick Tree Wardens
• The Philip Larkin Society
• Steven Falk ‘The Native Black Country Record Office’

Priory Park, Cape Road, Warwick
CV34 4JS

Accessibility: A tarmac path runs between Cape Road and Coventry Road. There is a steep hill at the Cape Road end. Other footpaths are on grass and may not be suitable for wheelchairs.

Written with local resident
Susan Clark 2015

For more information on Virginia House:
www.vahistorical.org/your-visit/virginia-house
Warwick Skyline

From this location, the famous Italian artist Antonio Canaletto drew the Warwick skyline in the late 1740s. The drawing shows the formal 17th Century gardens in the foreground.

In 1809, John Constable made a rough sketch of the same skyline.

The Priory and the Mansion

You are standing near the former Priory of St Sepulchre which was founded in the early 12th Century by the First Earl of Warwick, Henry de Newburgh.

The Priory was seized during Henry VIII’s dissolution of the monasteries and sold to Thomas Hawkins in 1546. The Priory was demolished and rebuilt as a prestigious house with 40 acres of parkland.

In August 1572, Queen Elizabeth 1st visited Warwick and Kenilworth castles. She made a surprise visit to The Priory and joined the household for dinner.

In the Hearth Tax of 1663, The Priory had 36 hearths, making it one of the largest houses in Warwickshire!

Residents of The Priory

Many families lived in The Priory including the Puckerings (1582–1709) and the Wise family (1709–1851).

Henry Wise made his fortune as a gardener to Queen Anne. He most likely created the raised terrace shown in Canaletto’s drawing of the Warwick skyline.

The Wise family sold The Priory to the Birmingham and Oxford Junction Railway, who built a railway line through the grounds.

The Lloyd family, who founded Lloyds Bank, owned The Priory from 1865-1935. The grounds had a tennis court, croquet lawn, aviary and fishpond.

In 1925, The Priory was advertised for demolition. Local residents protested but the interiors and contents were sold off.

An American couple, Mr and Mrs Weddell, bought the house. They had the stones – weighing several thousand tons – shipped to Virginia, USA, and rebuilt as Virginia House.

The Dell

The Dell is believed to have been landscaped as a woodland quarry garden by the Lloyd family in the 1860s. There was a children's play area in the Dell from 1957 until 2002.

Priory Pools

Now parkland and a children's play area, the Priory Pools were originally fishponds used by the monks. They were filled in during the 1960s.

Philip Larkin, a famous poet whose parents lived in Coten End, Warwick, during the 1940s used the footpath alongside the railway line and wrote about allotments which are still used today.

Priory Mill and Frog Mill

Thought to be medieval in origin, Priory Mill and Frog Mill were first mentioned in the early 18th Century. They were watermills used to pump water to residents of Warwick. All that remains of their existence are a few mounds.

St John’s Brook

From Priory Park, St John’s Brook flows through St Nicholas Park and into the River Avon. You may spot a Kingfisher flying along the banks and the pink wildflower ragged robin grows in this area. On the very edge of the park are some rare black poplar trees (Populus nigra).

Meadows

Meadows were planted in Priory Park in the mid-2000s to help improve biodiversity and enhance the natural feel of Priory Park. Wildflower species include yellow rattle, pignut and meadow buttercup.

AMIKARO

Two international Scout and Guide Jamborees took place in 1958 and 1979. Seven trees were planted to remember the 1958 event. AMIKARO in Esperanto means ‘friendship’.

Three of the original trees died and were replaced in 2012 by Warwick Tree Wardens, Friends of Priory Park and the Warwick Society.

AMIKARO Trees

- June berry (Amelanchier lamarckii)
- Crab apple (Malus sylvestris)
- Holly (Ilex ‘Nellie R Stevens’)  
- Golden rain tree (Koelreuteria paniculata)
- Cappadocian maple (Acer cappadocicum)
- False acacia (Robinia pseudoacacia)
- Hop hornbeam (Ostrya carpinifolia)

Traffic and parking signs:

Black & white photographs: Publishing copies / extracts of items from County Record Office collections: PH003/343/16, PH505/21 and PH505/20

Warwickshire County Record Office

PRIORY ROAD

NORTHGATE

CAPE ROAD

COVENTRY ROAD

TO TOWN CENTRE

0.5 miles

PRIORY POOLS

Meadow in Priory Pools

County Records Office

Meadows

AMIKARO

Path

Tarmac path

Brook

Black & white photographs: Publishing copies / extracts of items from County Record Office collections: PH003/343/16, PH505/21 and PH505/20

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