Isabella was the wife of Edward II, mother of Edward III and grandmother of the Black Prince. Her father was Philip IV of France and her marriage to Edward II – at the age of only 12 years – was a political union with the purpose of resolving territorial conflicts in France.

Margaret was the wife of Henry VI and in the 1450s and 1460s, the staunch defender of the Lancastrian cause in the ‘Wars of the Roses’. The daughter of René of Anjou, she married Henry VI in 1445 in a political union with the aim of securing peace during the Hundred Years’ War.

These walking tours have been produced in association with the 2018 exhibition, ‘Royal Women of Influence in Medieval Coventry, Isabella of France and Margaret of Anjou’, held during Heritage Open Days, 6–9 and 13–16 September.

Research by The University of Oxford and Medieval Coventry.

Queen Isabella
(1295–1358)

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Queen Margaret
(1430–1482)

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With the mental collapse of her husband and the birth of her son, Prince Edward, in 1453, Margaret increasingly took an active role in national affairs, defying the rival dynastic claims of Richard duke of York, and his son, Edward (later Edward IV). Margaret was largely responsible for moving the royal family to the Midlands, between 1456 and 1460, near her dower estates centred on the castles of Kenilworth, Leicester and Tutbury. She chose Coventry as the home of the royal family and effective capital of England. Finally defeated in 1471, she was captured and sent to exile in France, where she died in poverty in 1482.

During Margaret’s period of dominance, Coventry was experiencing a ‘golden age’ – its art, architecture, music and drama was the best that medieval England could offer, and Margaret’s husband, Henry VI, even granted it special status as a county in its own right, separate from Warwickshire.

Find Out More

More information about Queens Isabella and Margaret, their extraordinary connection with Coventry, and the surviving art and architecture of their times is available at:
www.medievalcoventry.co.uk/Royal_Women_of_Influence

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For further information on Medieval Coventry, see
www.medievalcoventry.co.uk

Architecture and Art Walking Tours

Isabella of France and Margaret of Anjou

Isabella of France & Margaret of Anjou

Architecture and Art Walking Tours

Encounter the places, artworks and artefacts associated with the two queens in Coventry

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Research by The University of Oxford and Medieval Coventry.

Margaret of Anjou (1430–1482), depicted in the Talbot Shrewsbury Book. © The British Library Board, Royal MS 15 E VI.

The North Window at St Mary’s Guildhall, second half of the 15th century. It depicts King Henry VI at the centre, flanked by his royal ancestors. Photograph by Paul & Chloe Gardner.

Isabella of France (1295–1358), from Détail des Grandes Chroniques de France enluminées par Jean Fouquet. © Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Français 6465, fol. 338v.

Margaret of Anjou (1430–1482) depicted in the Talbot Shrewsbury Book. © The British Library Board, Royal MS 15 E VI.

The North Window at St Mary’s Guildhall, second half of the 15th century. It depicts King Henry VI at the centre, flanked by his royal ancestors. Photograph by Paul & Chloe Gardner.

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Queen Isabella Walking Tour

Isabella founded St John the Baptist chapel and adjacent Bablake college in the 14th century. She owned Cheylesmore Manor, which was inherited by her grandson, The Black Prince, on her death. Isabella was a patron of the Greyfriars, the order of Franciscan friars who moved to Coventry around 1234.

It was on her initiative that Coventry was given the right to self-government and to elect a mayor, as laid out in the 1345 Charter of Incorporation. It was on her initiative that Coventry was given the right to self-government and to elect a mayor, as laid out in the 1345 Charter of Incorporation. On arrival into the city in 1456, Margaret was greeted with a spectacular series of pageants, including a scene near St John’s Hospital where St Margaret of Antioch – the queen’s personal patron saint – was depicted as slaying a dragon.

There are three tours with three different themes:
- Locations or items associated with Queen Isabella
- Locations or items associated with Queen Margaret of Anjou
- Locations of the highlights of Coventry’s medieval art

Each themed tour will take 30 minutes on foot. Visiting all locations on the map will take 2 hours 30 minutes on foot.

Walking Tours

Medieval Art Walking Tour

Coventry’s wealth is reflected in the fine art and architecture created by its skilled craftsmen, including the fragment of wall mural from the Priory Chapter House, showing the Apocalypse scene from the Bible, c. 1360. Early 15th-century painted windows by John Thornton, originally in St Michael’s Church, now in the new Cathedral; the large Dooms Painting, c. 1430s, in the east wall nave of Holy Trinity; fragments of a huge Crucifixion scene, c. 1430s, on the refectory wall of Coventry Charterhouse; the late 15th-century north wall window in St Mary’s Hall, with the Lancastrian kings and the tapestry, c. 1510, depicting Henry VI, Queen Margaret, their courtiers and saints.

Queen Margaret Walking Tour

Margaret, Henry VI and their son, Prince Edward, moved to the Midlands in 1456 and stayed here for four years, establishing Coventry as their headquarters, secure behind its strong walls and towers. On arrival into the city in 1456, Margaret was greeted with a spectacular series of pageants, including a scene near St John’s Hospital where St Margaret of Antioch – the queen’s personal patron saint – was depicted as slaying a dragon.

Accounts of the royal family’s time in Coventry can be found in the Leet Book, which superbly chronicles the city’s civic activities. Margaret would have been surrounded by some of the country’s finest art, music, drama and architecture, including the huge parish church of St Michael. St Mary’s Hall has a magnificent tapestry depicting Margaret, Henry and other notable kings and magnates, above which is a stunning painted window with Henry at the centre.

Other Medieval Highlights

- Far Gosford Street: 15th- and 16th-century houses
- Whitefriars dormitory and cloister, 14th century
- Whitefriars Gate, 14th century
- Spon Street: 14th- to 16th-century houses
- Weavers House: 15th century, 122 Upper Spon Street
- Ford’s Hospital