

Queen Margaret (1430–1482)

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 Rene of Anjou, she married Henry VI in 1445 in a political union with the aim of securing peace during the Hundred Years War.



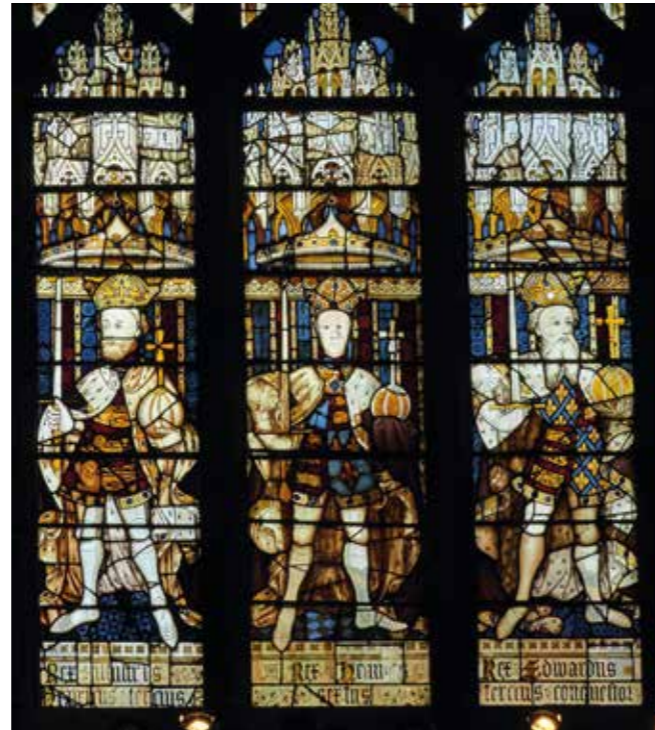
Margaret of Anjou (1430–1482), depicted in the Talbot Shrewsbury Book. © The British Library Board, Royal MS 15 E VI.

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.

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.



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.

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

The exhibition and walking tours have been supported by Great Places (Heritage Lottery Fund and Arts Council England) and Coventry City of Culture Trust.



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

ROYAL WOMEN OF INFLUENCE IN MEDIEVAL COVENTRY

Isabella of France & Margaret of Anjou



Architecture and Art Walking Tours

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



Queen Isabella (1295–1358)

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.



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.

Isabella soon found that her husband favoured Piers Gaveston and later, Hugh Despenser. Sent to France in 1326 to negotiate peace, she invaded England a year later with her lover, Roger Mortimer, leading to Edward’s abdication. On Edward’s death, Isabella and Mortimer ruled as regent for three years on behalf of Isabella’s son until he came of age and seized control of his kingdom in 1330. Isabella then supported her son – Edward III – until her death in 1358. Her strong association with Coventry dates from this period.

Active in Coventry from 1330 as lord of the manor of Cheylesmore, she made a lasting impact in Coventry by establishing its governmental structure – the creation of the city’s Corporation and the office of mayor. Her building programme and encouragement of Coventry’s textile industry reforms helped Coventry become the ‘boom town’ of late medieval England.

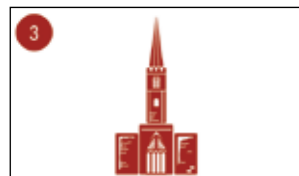
Queen Isabella Walking Tour

Isabella founded St John the Baptist chapel and adjacent Bablake college **1** in the 14th century. She owned Cheylesmore Manor, **2** which was inherited by her grandson, The Black Prince, on her death. Isabella was a patron of the Greyfriars, **3** 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, **4** and her supremacy over the Prior **5** – who, up to this point, had controlled the northern ‘Prior’s Half’ of the city – was confirmed 10 years later.



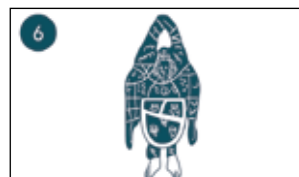
St John the Baptist Church and Bablake (Bond's Hospital)



Greyfriars – church tower and steeple



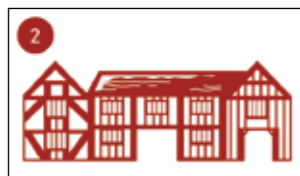
St Mary's Priory ruins and Visitor Centre; 14th-century Apocalypse painting from the Chapter House



John Thornton glass, 15th century, new Cathedral



Doom Painting, 15th century, Holy Trinity



Cheylesmore manor gatehouse



The Charter of Incorporation, Archive Centre, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum



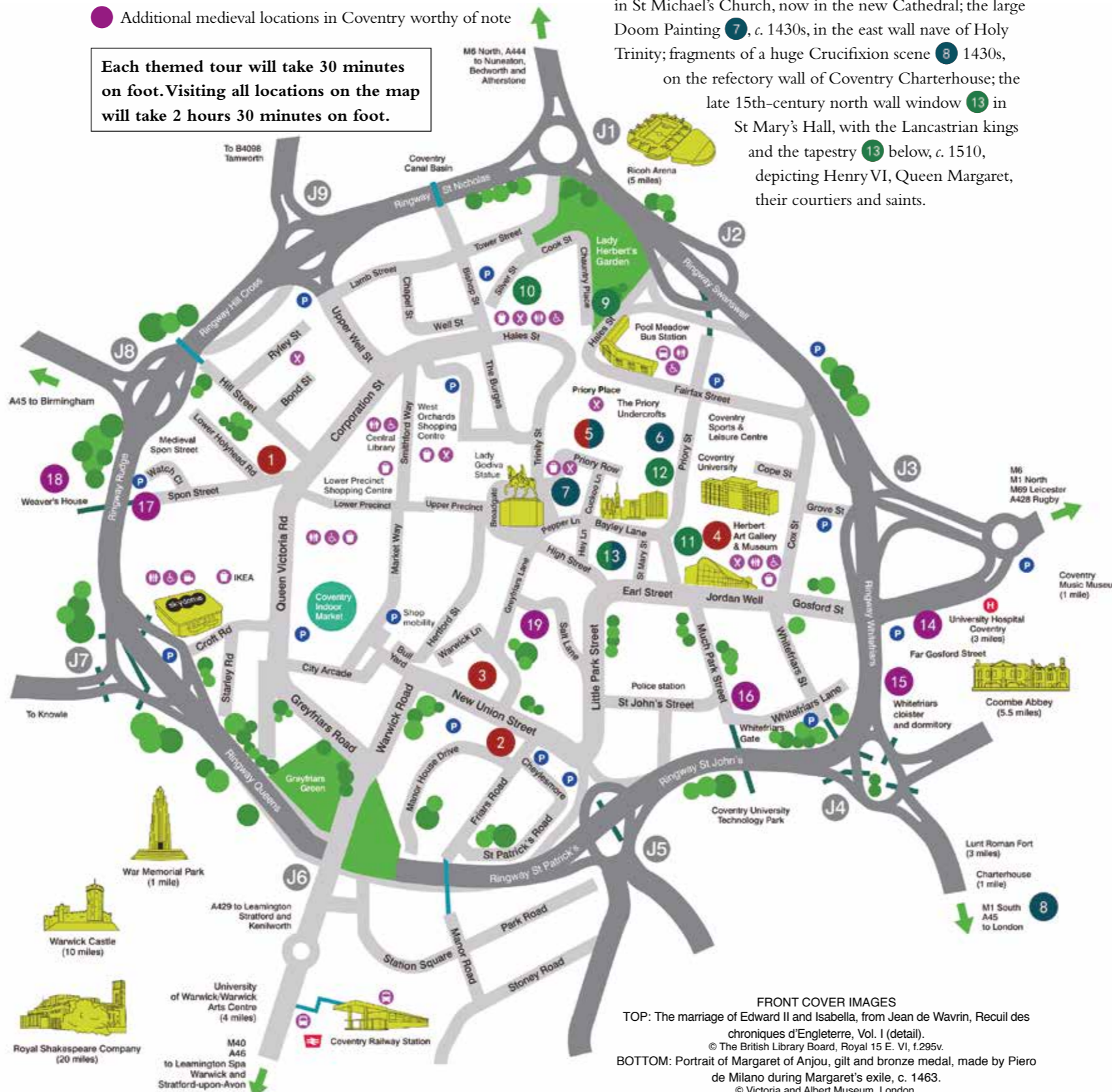
Refectory wall mural, 15th century, Charterhouse

Walking Tours

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
- Additional medieval locations in Coventry worthy of note

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



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 **5**; early 15th-century painted windows by John Thornton **6**, originally in St Michael's Church, now in the new Cathedral; the large Doom Painting **7**, c. 1430s, in the east wall nave of Holy Trinity; fragments of a huge Crucifixion scene **8** 1430s, on the refectory wall of Coventry Charterhouse; the late 15th-century north wall window **13** in St Mary's Hall, with the Lancastrian kings and the tapestry **13** below, 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. **9** On arrival into the city in 1456, Margaret was greeted with a spectacular series of pageants, including a scene near St John's Hospital **10** 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. **11** 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. **12** St Mary's Hall **13** 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.



Swanswell Gate, Cook Street Gates and city wall



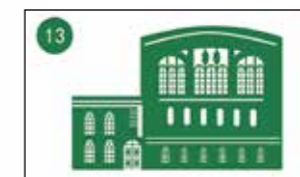
St John's Hospital (Old Grammar School)



The *Leet Book*, Archive Centre, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum



St Michael's tower and steeple



St Mary's Hall, featuring tapestry and north wall window

Other Medieval Highlights

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

FRONT COVER IMAGES

TOP: The marriage of Edward II and Isabella, from Jean de Wavrin, *Recueil des chroniques d'Angleterre*, Vol. I (detail).
© The British Library Board, Royal 15 E. VI, f.295v.
BOTTOM: Portrait of Margaret of Anjou, gilt and bronze medal, made by Piero de Milano during Margaret's exile, c. 1463.
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