THE JULIAN OF NORWICH TRAIL

As we know so little about Julian, it is impossible to know where she may have gone within the city, and what she saw. This trail therefore concentrates on sites that have connections to other recluses.

Although the city churches were all in existence in her day, they have nearly all been rebuilt and/or demolished since then.

The route is about 2.5 miles, and can be completed in about an hour. There are a number of hills, as well as narrow and uneven pavements. A short cut can be taken towards the end



Above: The Julian Cell, seen from the garden.
The cover image shows the statue of Julian, made by David
Holgate, on the west front of the cathedral (no 5 on the map)

JULIAN OF NORWICH

Julian experienced visions during a near-death experience in 1373. They were her *Revelations* of *Divine Love*, which she decided to write – making her the first woman known to write in the English language. She chose to live as an anchoress (recluse) in a Cell attached to St Julian's Church. It is now her Shrine.

The Julian Church with the Julian Cell is open daily from about 9.30am to 6pm.

Details of the services and events in St Julian's Church can be found on the parish website: www.stjohnstimberhill.org

All Hallows Guesthouse

Next door is All Hallows Guesthouse, a former convent which offers accommodation to travellers. For more information please visit www.allhallowsnorwich.co.uk

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT JULIAN

Find out more on our website, on our social media channels, or by scanning the QR code.

www.julianofnorwich.org



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#Julian6

THE JULIAN OF NORWICH PARTNERSHIP

The Julian Centre, St Julian's Alley, Rouen Road, Norwich, NR1 1QT

Email: contact@julianofnorwich.org
Reg Charity 1192577

Welcome

Welcome to this trail, originally created for the 650th anniversary of Julian's *Shewings*. It celebrates not only Julian, but also some of the extraordinary number of other recluses within the city, both before, during, and after Julian's time, most of whom are simply names in records, if even that.

Julian received these *Shewings* in 1373 when she was seriously ill, and, when she recovered, she became an anchoress at St Julian's church. She wrote them down in a book, now known as *Revelations of Divine Love*, and, in doing so, became the first known female author in English. Some twenty years later she wrote a longer version of the text, incorporating her further contemplations on what she had been shown. Copies of both versions exist.

One well-loved image from the book is that of the whole of creation as something 'about the size of a hazelnut' cradled in God's hand.

The trail starts and ends at St Julian's Church and we encourage you to explore the church and the cell, as well as the Julian Centre next door. The church is open from about 9.30am to 6pm every day. See the back of this leaflet for more information, or visit our website: www.julianofnorwich.org

Below: The Julian cell, inside and outside





What was a recluse?

A recluse, usually called an anchorite (male) or anchoress (female), was a person who took a religious vow of solitude, stability (remaining in one place), and permanent enclosure. They dedicated their lives to God in meditation and prayer, 'anchored' in one place for the rest of their lives. Their dwellings were called anchorholds, and consisted of one or two rooms, with extra rooms for a servant, who dealt with practical things like cooking and shopping.

There was another type of recluse, called **hermits**, who supported themselves by repairing roads and bridges, and cleaning out ditches. They were free to move to a different site if it suited them.

Recluses in Norwich

Recluses were an important part of the religious landscape in Norwich, and they seem to have been concentrated in two areas: Over-the-Water, and Conesford, which is where St Julian's is situated. Indeed, St Julian and its neighbouring churches of St Etheldreda and St Edward all had anchorholds that were in use right through the Middle Ages.

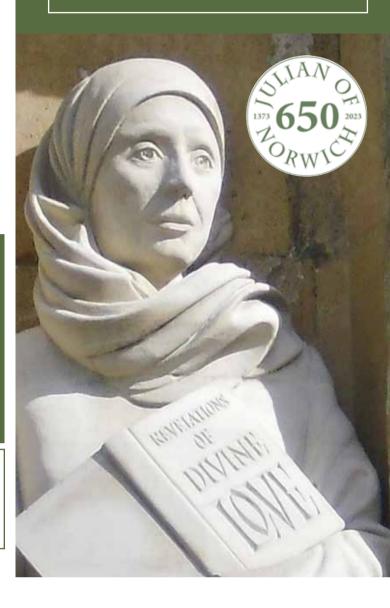
From the 1290s until the Reformation in the 1530s there was a steady stream of people coming to follow this lifestyle – and in Norwich's case, they were mostly female. They were by no means all local people. Indeed, Norwich seems to have been a more popular choice than London, which may be a result of its international status as a trading port – and trade itself has always been a means by which new expressions of religious faith spread.



The Julian Church and Cell

THE JULIAN OF NORWICH TRAIL

A trail to celebrate
Julian of Norwich – mystic, anchoress
and the first woman to write a book in
the English language



Support

It may seem odd to follow a contemplative life in the middle of a busy city, but it did enable financial support. Some recluses were sponsored by specific patrons or families, but others were self-supporting, and a city provided the population and the cash to invest in this. In return, the recluse supported the city in general, and also individuals, with their prayers, and (when needed) with counsel and spiritual guidance. Recluses were strictly forbidden to engage in trade to support themselves, but as we shall see, there may be evidence that some did do so! They were greatly valued by the city, especially after 1348, when the Black Death struck, and people were worried about going to judgment unconfessed and unabsolved from sin. The prayers of recluses for the departed were much valued in this context.

Who were they?

Julian is now the best-known of the Norwich recluses, but we know almost nothing about her. The same is true of most of the others – sometimes not even their names (wills just speak of 'the anchoress at ...'). Where we do know something of their identities and backgrounds, they were from families with means. Most of the Norwich anchoresses seem not to have been nuns, but ordinary women seeking to live a holy life apart. Surviving wills suggest that about 20% of Norwich citizens gave money to either a specific anchoress or to all of them, expecting her prayers for their souls in return.

Conesford

This is the name for the southern part of the city, where St Julian's church is situated. In the Middle Ages, it was a very busy, and not very desirable, place, with ships loading and unloading, lime workings, leather processing, and the butchery up the hill in Ber Street.

THE JULIAN TRAIL

START AND FINISH: ST JULIAN'S CHURCH, ST JULIAN'S ALLEY, ROUEN ROAD.

2.5 miles approx.

Leave St Julian's (no 1 on the map overleaf), and turn right down the alley towards King Street. Just beyond Dragon Hall is the site of the Austin Friars priory (no 2; now St Ann's Wharf) – it occupied the whole block from St Ann's Lane up to Mountergate.

Down St Ann's Lane is a footbridge built in 2009. The name 'Lady Julian Bridge' won a competition.

Turn left along King Street, and walk along, passing the church of St Peter Parmentergate on the left. This was rebuilt from 1475. Its name recalls the leather industry in this area: parmenters made parchment.

At the junction with Rose Lane is the site of the Greyfriars' (Franciscan) priory: this extended northwards as far as the Cathedral. On the northeast corner of Rose Lane was the church of St John the Evangelist (no 3), which the friars took over and turned into an anchorhold, so there was a recluse living here.

Carry on across Prince of Wales Road (which runs more-or-less through the site of the Greyfriars' church, *no 4*) into Tombland, and turn right into the Cathedral Close, through the Ethelbert Gate.

There were some recluses at the Cathedral (no 5), though we have almost no evidence for them. There are three modern representations of Julian at the Cathedral:

- a statue on the west front. This, and the accompanying one of St Benedict, are by David Holgate (1939-2014), and placed here in 2000.
- a figure (bottom right) in the 1964 Benedictine window in the Bauchon chapel, designed by Monica Forsyth. (It was erroneously thought at the time that she had been a nun at Carrow Priory, hence her inclusion).
- another stained-glass figure on the south side of St Saviour's chapel, by AK Nicholson. She keeps company with three other East Anglians: Saints Felix, Fursey, and Edmund.

Leave the Close via the Erpingham Gate, cross the road, and go along Tombland Alley via the archway beside the 'leaning house'.

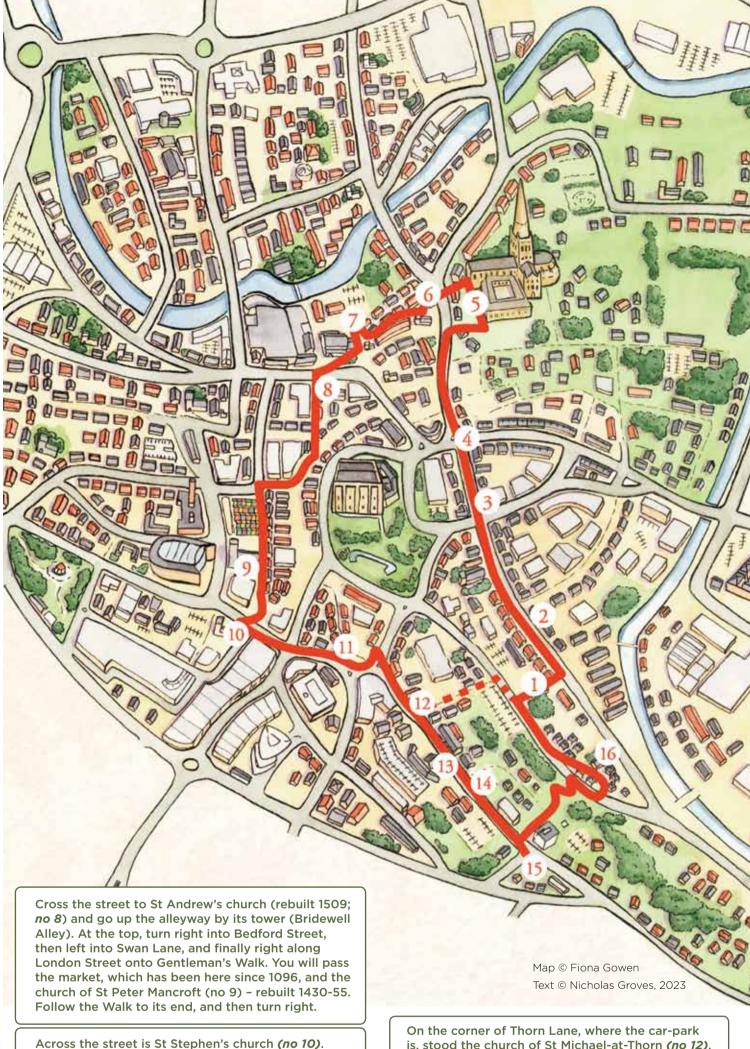
On the left is the church of St George Tombland (no 6). There was an anchorite here, also, and the vestry, attached to the north side of the chancel, may possibly have been the anchorhold.

Follow the alley round the base of the tower, and into Princes Street. Turn right, and on the corner is the church of St Peter Hungate. This was mostly rebuilt in 1460. There was an anchoress living here in 1247

Turn right down Elm Hill, and stop at the barred gates just beyond the east end of the Blackfriars' church. If you look through, you can see three arches built into the wall of the church. This is the remains of an anchorhold (no 7), though quite what form it took is unclear; the remains do suggest at least three rooms. We have the names of two anchoresses who lived here – both women, although this was a house of male friars. Katherine Foster lived here 1472-86, and Katherine Mann

Just across the street is the Briton's Arms (the thatched building). It was built in the early 15th century. It was long thought that a group of women lived here for a time in an informal religious community (not, as often stated, a béguinage, as there were none in England) in the 14th century, but it now seems likely they were actually in a house next door, which has long been demolished.

Return back up Elm Hill, and turn right along Princes Street, pausing to look at the exterior of the Blackfriars' church of 1327 (and much repaired!) This is the only friary church in England to survive complete. This is pretty much as it was in Julian's time.



Across the street is St Stephen's church (no 10). This is not as Julian knew it, as it was totally rebuilt between 1530 and 1560. Between 1402 and 1420 the Vicar here was Richard Caister. Caister was known as the 'Good Vyker', because of his holiness of life, his concern for his parishioners, and for the fact that he preached and wrote in English. Caister wrote a significant prayer which focussed on the grace of God through Jesus Christ. After his death, Caister was buried in the chancel of St Stephen's, and his tomb became a pilgrimage destination of national importance for many years, but owing to rebuildings and re-orderings in the church over the years, its site is now unknown.

Leave St Stephen, and turn right along Rampant Horse Street (past Marks & Spencer), cross the road into Westlegate. At the top is All Saints Church (now an antiques mart; *no 11*), which was pastorally associated with St Julian for many years – its font is now in St Julian. There was an anchoress here, too, and in 1278 her servants were charged with blocking the common drain 'so that no-one can pass by there'! Does this mean she was engaging in some form of trade to support herself – even though that was strictly forbidden?

Just round the corner is St John Timberhill, now the parish church, where another recluse lived, apparently in a cell on the north side of the tower (the tower fell down in 1784). The cell fell into disuse at the Reformation, and in 1641 was turned into a house. It was later pulled down. Turn right along Ber Street. On the corner of Thorn Lane, where the car-park is, stood the church of St Michael-at-Thorn (no 12), bombed on the same night as St Julian, and its main doorway is now the arch leading into the Cell.

You can now either follow the hill down, turn right at the bottom, and return to St Julian, or make a little detour along Ber Street. On the end wall of no 73 (corner of Brook Place) is a mural of Julian (no 13), painted by Antony Allen in January 2020.

A little further along still (just past Horn's Lane) are the remains of the tower of St Bartholomew (no 14) where there was an anchoress, Katherine, in 1306.

At the far end of the street is the imposing tower of St John-de-Sepulchre *(no 15)*. There was a recluse living here in the time of Henry III (1216-72).

Go down Mariners' Lane, then down the zig-zag path to Rouen Road. Just to the right, in the trees, is the church of St Etheldreda *(no 16)*. There was an anchorhold here, built in 1305 which remained in use until the Reformation.

Across the street, more-or-less where Argyle Street opens, stood the church of St Edward. (The corners of the two churchyards were only a few feet apart.) This church also had a long history of anchoresses. In 1269 the parish was united with St Julian's, both of them belonging to Carrow Priory.

Now walk along Rouen Road, back to St Julian.