**A 14th Century Italian Marriage Part 1-3**

**Part 1 - 7th March 2024**  
In 1335 Francesco di Marco Datini was born in the small Italian city of Prato near Florence. When his parents died he went to work in Florence, but he soon moved to Avignon where the Papal Court was situated for more than 70 years. He built up a trading network around the Mediterranean and in France.

**Part 2 - 14th March 2024**  
Aged 40, a rich man in trade he married the 16-year-old Margarita Bandini who was from an impoverished noble family. Their marriage survived in spite of her inability to bear a child. She was determined to excel as a wife and a partner in his business. Francesco was a difficult husband, an extreme workaholic who fathered illegitimate children both before and after his marriage. He was also a hoarder which is why we still have a huge quantity of their business and personal correspondence. They made their home in Prato, but Francesco spent a lot of time away, managing his business in Pisa and Florence. They wrote to each other very frequently. At first the servants read out Francesco’s to her and she dictated her replies,  
but she learned to read and write for herself. Many of their letters have survived and these are at the heart of this series.

**Part 3 - 21st March 2024**  
They had a friend, Ser Lapo Mazzei, who was the administrator of a large hospital in Florence. His wisdom and kindness helped to smooth the relationship between the couple as they worked to build a palazzo in Prato which was eventually host to cardinals and the King of France. The building survives with many of its original features intact. As death approached Franceso tried to atone for his sins. He left the palazzo and all of his wealth to the poor of Prato.