

Our Lady of Walsingham

Feastday: September 24

Our Lady of Walsingham is England's national Marian shrine.

According to legend, Our Lady appeared in Walsingham to the Saxon noblewoman Richeldis de Faverches, in 1061.

In three visions, Richeldis was taken by Mary to be shown the house in Nazareth where Gabriel had announced the news of the birth of Jesus. Mary then asked her to build an exact replica of that house in Walsingham.

Later, Geoffrey de Faverches, left instructions for the building of a Priory by the Holy House.

The Priory passed into the care of Augustinian Canons somewhere between 1146 and 1174.

Throughout the centuries, Walsingham became one of the most popular shrines in England.

Many pilgrims returned from their visit healed in body and spirit. Walsingham received visits from King Henry III, Edward II, Edward III, Henry IV, Edward IV, Henry VII and Henry VIII, who finally brought about its destruction in 1538.

In 1897, the first official Catholic pilgrimage after the Reformation took place at the restored 14th century Slipper Chapel, which is now the centre of the Roman Catholic National Shrine.

In the 1920s the Anglican shrine began growing in the remains of the original Priory and now has its own church, housing a copy of the original statue of Our Lady of Walsingham and a replica of the Holy House. There is also now a Russian Orthodox chapel in Walsingham. The village is home to many retreat centres and pilgrim hostels and once again attracts thousands of pilgrims each year.