

John Wesley went to Walsingham in 1781 and from then onwards the Wesleyan Church together with a Primitive Methodist Church became the largest Christian Churches in the town.

This remained the case until a new Vicar was appointed and inducted in 1921. He set about the task of setting up an Anglican Shrine in the Parish Church at first, and then ten years later building a new Shrine. The first Anglo-Catholic National Pilgrimage took place in 1934.

In 1938, the Roman Catholics returned to the town, building a new Slipper Chapel and Holy Ghost Chapel. From that date Roman Catholic pilgrimages began.

In the last fifty years Methodism in the town has declined in numbers while Catholic pilgrimages have increased until now thousands of pilgrims come in both organised and individual pilgrimages each year. Each of the organised pilgrimages is headed by a crowned and throned statue of the Virgin Mary holding the infant Jesus. The pilgrimages pass through the town to either the Anglican Shrine or the Roman Chapel of Reconciliation. When the Pope came to England, the Roman Statue of Our Lady of Walsingham was taken to Wembley Stadium to be venerated by him.

Renovation work is essential to maintain the work and witness in Walsingham. We need to raise £40,000 for work on every aspect of the Church. We have to deal with woodworm and dryrot, gutters and roof, decoration and fabric. We want the work to develop and make the Church more available for worship and devotion.

If you can help, please forward your gift to:
Pastor B G Barton, The Manse, Grove Road, Wells next the Sea,
Norfolk, NR23 1HY Fakenham 710201

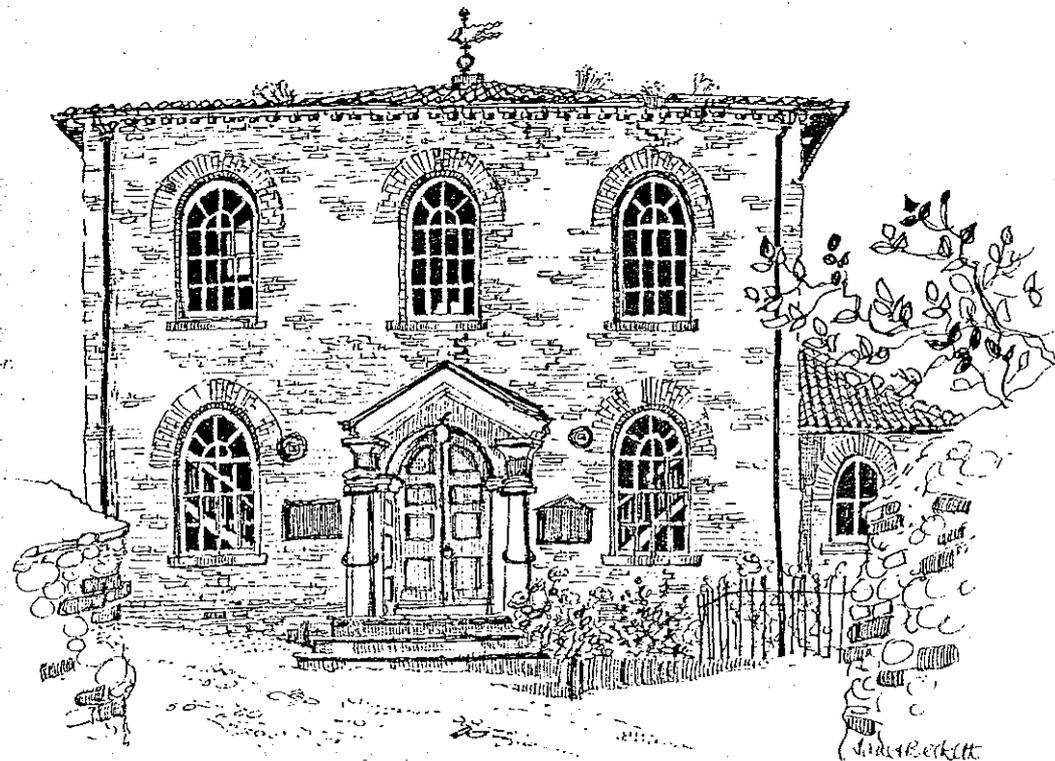
Worship is held each Sunday at 2.30pm.

A mid-week act of devotion is held on
Wednesdays at 2.30pm

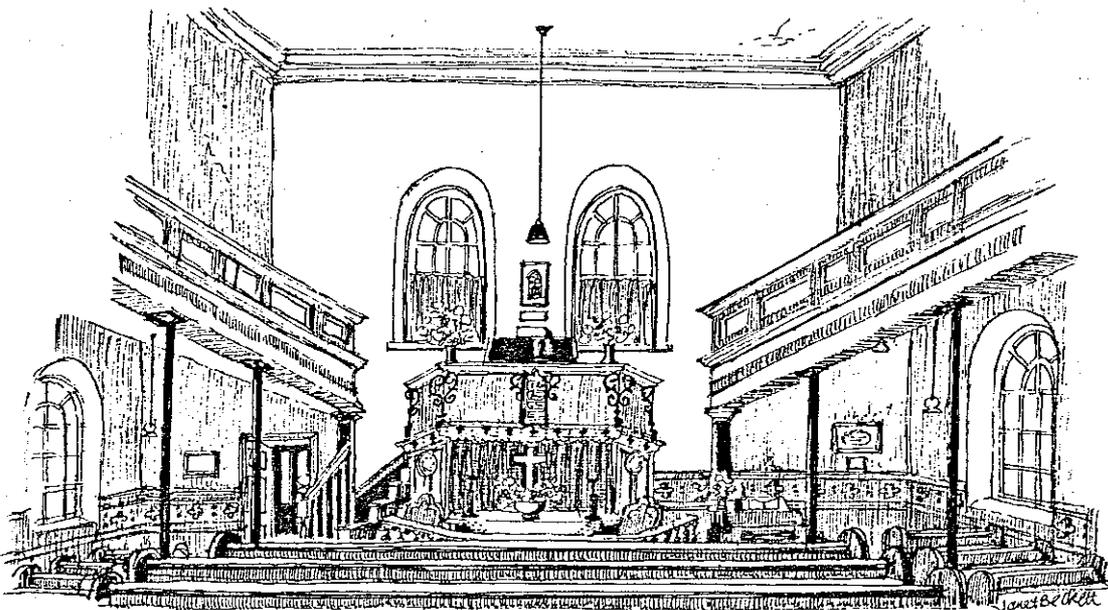
Little Walsingham Methodist Church

The Society that built this Church was founded in 1779.

The exterior of the present Methodist Church was built in 1793/4 and it is the oldest still in use in East Anglia. It is a four-square brick building, arched windows and pillared portico. The tiled, pyramid roof is topped by a weather vane.



The interior is in the plain, simple style of eighteenth century Methodist preaching houses. The gallery is on three sides and still has the original pews, and a pipe organ of later date. Downstairs the pews are of the more heavy style favoured by the Victorian worshippers who were also responsible for the dominant central pulpit which dwarfs the communion area with its simple table and, unusually, brass candlesticks. There is also a small font dating from 1888.



John Wesley's only visit to Little Walsingham was on Tuesday October 30th, 1781. He wrote in his Journal:

"At two in the afternoon I preached at Walsingham, a place famous for many generations. Afterwards I walked over what is left of the famous Abbey, the east end of which is still standing. We then went to the Friary; the cloisters and chapel whereof are almost entire. Had there been a grain of virtue or public spirit in Henry the Eighth, these noble buildings need not have run to ruin".

Early documents are still kept in the church. Copies of early licences which gave the worshippers legal protection if they registered as Dissenters from the Church of England, are to be seen. One is for Great Walsingham and is dated 1791. The other, for Little Walsingham is dated 1794.

The Methodist Church stands close to the main street and in sight of the pilgrims as they process. Many of them seek to enter the Church as it is customary for pilgrims to visit all the 'holy' houses while in Walsingham. The Methodists do share in the various events arranged during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and do respond to invitations to join in other activities with the other denominations when invited. It cannot be stressed too much that the Methodist Church is the only Non-Conformist Church in the town and, alone puts the emphasis on Christianity in Salvation by Faith and assurance.

Walsingham Town

Walsingham is possibly unique in England in that it is a place of pilgrimage for Anglo-Catholics and the place of pilgrimage for Roman Catholics. To a lesser extent it is also a place of pilgrimage for the Orthodox Churches.

Before the Norman Conquest the lady of the manor was inspired to build a small house representing the Home of Jesus of Nazareth. During the next five hundred years Walsingham became a place of pilgrimage. A Shrine was built and was placed in the care of the Augustinians. In their turn the Franciscans set up a Friary. Many Kings made pilgrimages during their reigns from Henry III to Henry VIII. It became known as a place where God answered prayer. In 1512 Erasmus made a pilgrimage to the Shrine and wrote 'When you look in you would say, it was a mansion of the saints, so much does it glitter on all sides with jewels, gold and silver'.

In 1538, King Henry VII the Prior and Canons were forced to sign the Act of Supremacy and the Priory was suppressed. A year later a poor woman of Wells was paraded through the town for daring to claim that Our Lady of Walsingham, the Virgin Mary, still grants favours.

From then until this century there were always those who quietly remained faithful to the Shrine and dreamed of restoring it.