SAINSBURY INSTITUTE
for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures
セインズベリー日本藝術研究所

NARA TO NORWICH

PILGRIMAGE AND THE ANTHROPOCENE

Norwich to Little Walsingham

Tuesday 09 – Friday 12 June 2026

INFORMATION

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Front cover: Doorway at St Andrew's Church, Little Snoring. Photograph: John Falconer.

WELCOME

SAINSBURY INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF JAPANESE ARTS AND CULTURES

We are delighted to welcome you to our walk of the pilgrimage route between Norwich and Little Walsingham. Forming part of our wider *Nara to Norwich* project, this new research strand is exploring sacred spaces across cultures through the lens of pilgrimage. How did pilgrimage impact the landscapes it passed through, and in turn how was pilgrimage shaped by the places these routes crossed? How can we better understand the experience of pilgrimage for people in the past, as an often spiritual but also social, physical and cultural undertaking?

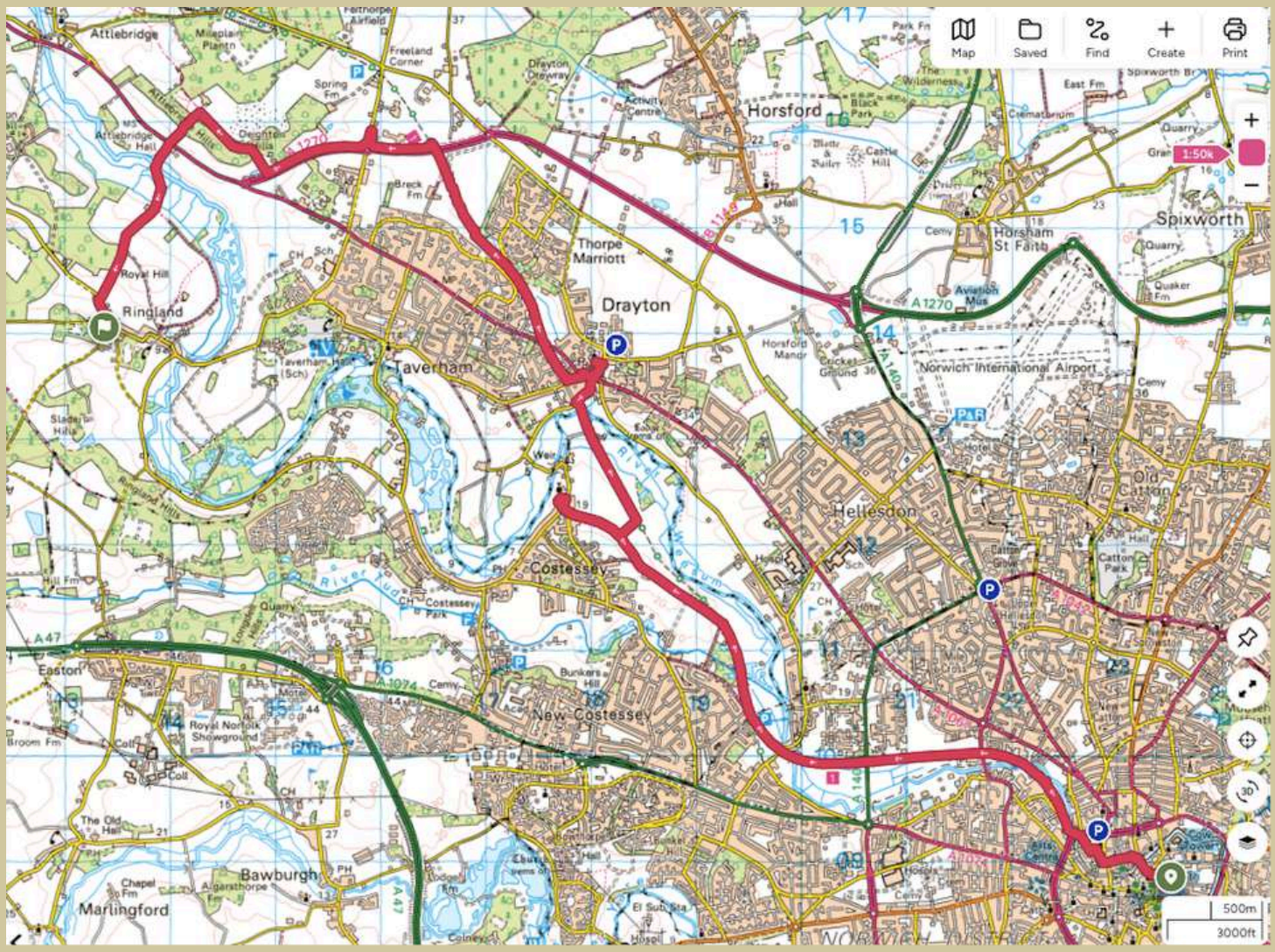
By physically walking the routes pilgrims took, we are hoping to build a richer picture of this important phenomenon and welcome your feedback and involvement in this. You can find further details about some of the themes we will be researching later in this project booklet. As you are walking with us, we will have a selection of invited experts who will be speaking on different themes relevant to the route to prompt us to consider our own experience of pilgrimage as well as those of people in the past.

The research is comparative in nature, using as its starting point two pilgrimage routes located in the east and west termini of our *Nara to Norwich* project, which will be the thematic focus of our final day of walking. On finishing the walk of the East Anglian route, we will be making preparations for our walk of the comparative route in Japan—the Ise Honkaido—which links the Buddhist temple of Hasedera, with whom the Sainsbury Institute have an ongoing collaboration, to Ise Grand Shrine, Japan's most venerated Shinto shrine. We hope the project will shed new light on pilgrimage across cultures and will look forward to bringing you more news about the results and outputs of the work as these develop.

We are grateful to the many people who have supported the project and been so generous with their time and offers to help with arrangements for the walk including Scilla Landale and the Norfolk Churches Trust, all of the churches included in the route, Norwich Cathedral, Walsingham Anglican Shrine, and our experts.

The *Nara to Norwich* Project Team
Simon Kaner, Susan Whitfield, Andy Hutcheson and Olivia Butler

Read our project blog posts **here**



DAY 1 | TUESDAY 09 JUNE

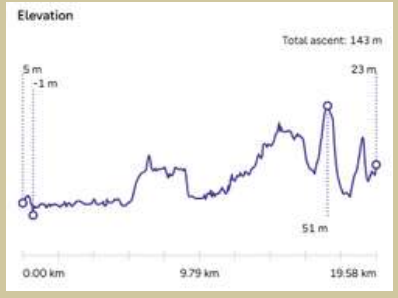
Norwich to Ringland

Distance: 19.5 km

Scan for OS Map

INVITED EXPERTS AND EVENTS

Welcome at Norwich Cathedral by Revd Dr Peter Doll
Industrial Archaeology: talk by Sophie Cabot (Norwich Castle Museum)
The Cult of St Edmund: talk by Katy Cubitt (Professor Emerita of Medieval History, UEA)
The Art of Medieval Churches: talk by Meg Bernstein (Lecturer in Medieval History of Art, UEA)



Churches and Sites of Interest

- Norwich Cathedral
- St Edmund's Church, Costessey
- St Margaret's Church, Drayton
- St. Peter's Church, Ringland

NORWICH TO RINGLAND

THEME: THE ART AND HISTORY OF SAINTS AND PILGRIMAGE

08:00 - 08:30	Holy Communion at Norwich Cathedral (for those who wish to attend)
08:15 - 08:35	Convene at Prior's Hall, Norwich Cathedral
08:35	Introduction to the project team and welcome by Revd Canon Peter Doll
09:00	Set out from Norwich Cathedral
	Distance to next stop: 4.80 km. Day total: 4.80 km
10:30	Hellesdon former railway station on the Marriott's Way **Industrial Archaeology:** talk by Sophie Cabot (Norwich Castle Museum)
	Distance to next stop: 3.29 km. Day total: 8.06 km
11:30	St Edmund's Church, Costessey **The Cult of St Edmund:** talk by Katy Cubitt (Professor Emerita of Medieval History, UEA) Toilets
	Distance to next stop: 3 km. Day total: 11.06 km
12:45	St Margaret's Church, Drayton ***Lunch stop*** (12:45-14:00) Toilets Refreshments Cafe/pub
	Distance to next stop: 8.44 km. Day total: 19.5 km
16:15	St. Peter's Church, Ringland **The Art of Medieval Churches:** talk by Meg Bernstein (Lecturer in Medieval History of Art, UEA) Toilets Refreshments
17:30	Coach pick up
18:10	Arrival back in Norwich (Tombland) [approximate timings]

DAY 2 | WEDNESDAY 10 JUNE

Ringland to Swanton Morley

Distance: 16.8 km

Scan for OS Map

INVITED EXPERTS AND EVENTS

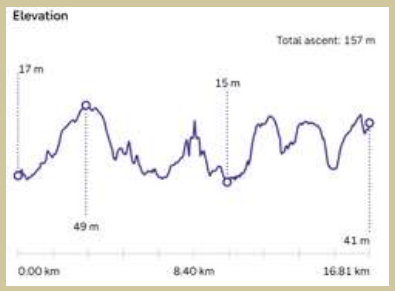
Trees, Memory and the Passage of Time: talk by Peter Coles (Academic Associate, Sainsbury Institute)

The Ecology of Churches: talk by Will Nash (Lecturer in Biological Sciences, UEA)

King Edmund, Headless Horsemen and a Bleeding Stone: talk by Susan Whitfield (Professor of Silk Road Studies, UEA)

Churches and Sites of Interest

- All Saints' Church, Weston Longville
- Treow Woodland Project and Wrongs Covert Ancient Woodland
- Bleeding Stone of Lyng
- Ruins of St Edmund's Chapel, Lyng
- St Margaret's Church, Lyng
- St Mary's Church, Elsing
- All Saints' Church, Swanton Morley



RINGLAND TO SWANTON MORLEY

THEME: ECOLOGY AND LANDSCAPE

08:00 Coach pick up from Tombland (near to Zizzi's)

08:45 Set out from Ringland

Distance to next stop: 3.25 km. Day total: 3.25 km

09:45 All Saints' Church, Weston Longville
Toilets

Distance to next stop: 3.65 km. Day total: 6.9 km

10:45 Treow Woodland Project and Wrongs Covert Ancient Woodland
Trees, Memory and the Passage of Time: talk by Peter Coles (Academic Associate, Sainsbury Institute)
Toilets
Refreshments

Distance to next stop: 1.55 km. Total: 8.45 km

12:00 Bleeding Stone of Lyng and St Edmund's Chapel
King Edmund, Headless Horsemen and a Bleeding Stone: talk by Susan Whitfield (Professor of Silk Road Studies, UEA)

Distance to next stop: 1.96 km. Total: 10.41 km

13:00 St Margaret's Church, Lyng
Lunch stop (13:00-14:00)
Cafe/pub

Distance to next stop: 2.59 km. Total: 13 km

14:30 St Mary's Church, Elsing

Distance to next stop: 3.8 km. Total: 16.8 km

16:30 All Saints' Church, Swanton Morley
The Ecology of Churches: talk by Will Nash (Lecturer in Biological Sciences, UEA)
Toilets
Cafe/pub

17:15 Coach pick up

18:00 Arrival back in Norwich (Tombland) [approximate timings]

DAY 3 | THURSDAY 11 JUNE

Swanton Morley to Great Ryburgh

Distance: 18.46 km

Scan for OS Map

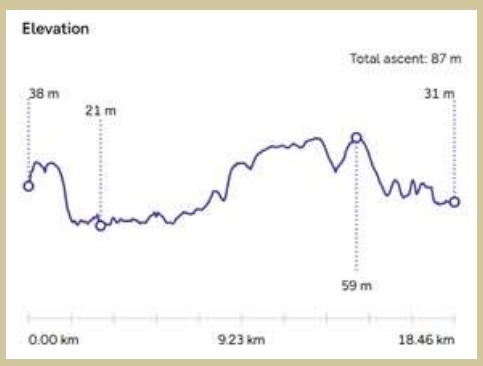
INVITED EXPERTS AND EVENTS

The Archaeology of North Elmham: talk by Simon Kaner (Executive Director, Sainsbury Institute)

Women and Pilgrimage: talk by Susan Whitfield (Professor of Silk Road Studies, UEA)

Churches and Sites of Interest

- St Margaret's Church, Worthing
- St Mary's Chapel, North Elmham
- North Elmham Chapel
- St Helen's Church, Gateley
- St Andrew's Church, Great Ryburgh



SWANTON MORLEY TO GREAT RYBURGH

THEME: PEOPLE AND PILGRIMAGE IN THE PAST

08:00	Coach pick up from Tombland (near to Zizzi's)
09:15	Arrival and set out from All Saints' Church, Swanton Morley *Distance to next stop: 4.82 km. Day total: 4.82 km*
11:00	St Margaret's Church, Worthing *Distance to next stop: 3.98 km. Day total: 8.8 km*
12:00	St Mary's Church and North Elmham Chapel **The Archaeology of North Elmham:** talk by Simon Kaner (Executive Director, Sainsbury Institute) ***Lunch break*** (12:00-13:30) Toilets Refreshments Cafe/pub *Distance to next stop: 5.47 km. Day total: 14.27 km*
15:00	St Helen's Church, Gateley **Women and Pilgrimage:** talk by Susan Whitfield (Professor of Silk Road Studies, UEA) *Distance to next stop: 4.19 km. Total: 18.46 km*
16:30	St Andrew's Church, Great Ryburgh Toilet Refreshments Cafe/pub
17:15	Coach pick up
18:15	Arrival back in Norwich (Tombland) [approximate timings]

DAY 4 | FRIDAY 12 JUNE

Great Ryburgh to Little Walsingham

Distance: 18.07 km

Scan for OS Map

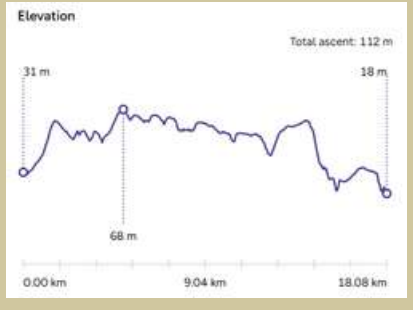
INVITED EXPERTS AND EVENTS

Pilgrimage Across Japan and the UK: talk by Simon Kaner (Executive Director, Sainsbury Institute)

Space, Place and Society: The Ise Honkaido and the Walsingham Way talk by Olivia Butler (Digital Research and Project Coordinator, Sainsbury Institute)

Churches and Sites of Interest

- Ruins of All Saints' Church, Little Ryburgh
- All Saints' Church, Stibbard
- Ruins of St Mary's Church, Fulmodeston
- Ruins of St John the Baptist's Church, Croxton
- All Saints' Church, Kettlestone
- St Andrew's Church, Little Snoring
- St Mary's Church, Great Snoring
- St Giles' Church, Houghton
- Roman Catholic Shrine of Our Lady, the Slipper Chapel
- Anglican Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham



GREAT RYBURGH TO WALSINGHAM

THEME: PILGRIMAGE ACROSS CULTURES

07:45	Coach pick up from Tombland (near to Zizzi's)
09:00	Arrival and set out from St Andrew's Church, Great Ryburgh
	Distance to next stop: 2.69 km. Day total: 2.69 km
09:45	All Saints' Church, Stibbard
	Distance to next stop: 1.93 km. Day total: 4,62 km
10:30	Ruins of St Mary's Church, Fulmodeston
	Distance to next stop: 1.25 km. Total: 5.87 km
11:00	Ruins of St John the Baptist, Croxton
	Distance to next stop: 2.04 km. Total: 7.93 km
11:30	All Saints' Church and Village Hall, Kettlestone ***Lunch stop*** (11:30-12:15) Toilets
	Distance to next stop: 2.6 km. Total: 10.53 km
12:45	St Andrew's Church, Little Snoring
	Distance to next stop: 2.1 km. Total: 12.63 km
13:30	St Mary's Church, Great Snoring
	Distance to next stop: 2.5 km. Total: 15.13 km
14:15	St Giles' Church, Houghton
	Distance to next stop: 0.51 km. Total: 15.64 km
14:30	The Catholic Shrine National Shrine and Basilica of Our Lady, the Slipper Chapel site Toilets Cafe/pub
	Distance to next stop: 2.43 km. Total: 18.07 km
15:45	Anglican Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham ***Closing workshop and tea*** **Welcome** from Fr Benjamin Eadon Toilets
17:30	Coach pick up
19:00	Arrival back in Norwich (Tombland) [approximate timings]

HAZARDS

While the route is not technically challenging, there are a few hazards to be aware of when walking. Please pay close attention to these as you will be responsible for your own safety during the walk. The team will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

LIVESTOCK

Some of the fields we pass through may have cattle . Please be mindful when walking through these spaces.

UNEVEN GROUND

Some parts of the route are off-road and the ground may be uneven with exposed roots. Please take care when walking.

TRAFFIC AND CARS

Parts of the route are on roads with no pavement. Please take extra care when walking on these areas.

WET WEATHER

Weather can be changeable so please wear appropriate clothing and be aware of muddy and slippery surfaces.

HOT WEATHER

Please be mindful of heatstroke—drink plenty of water and, if needed, walk in the shade, use sunscreen, and wear a hat.

FOOD AND DRINK

While there are cafes and pubs along the route, these are limited so we recommend bringing enough of your own supplies to last for the day.

TOILETS: Please note that toilets are limited along the route

WHAT TO BRING

Below are some suggestions of what to bring on the walk—please bear in mind that conditions might be changeable and there are some long breaks between towns/villages so so ensuring you have enough food and drink is essential.

STURDY WALKING SHOES AND APPROPRIATE CLOTHING

We will be passing through different terrain and areas during the walk so please bear in mind the following:

- Some ground may be muddy or uneven so ensure you are wearing **sturdy walking shoes** and, if you use them, consider bringing **walking poles**.
- Long grass and fields with livestock may have insects or nettles, so please consider wearing **long trousers** for these sections (mainly Day 1).
- Weather can be unpredictable so please ensure you are dressed appropriately, including **hats and sun cream** for hot days and **waterproofs** in case of rain.
- As some of the route is along roads, wearing **clothing that is clearly visible to passing traffic** is advisable

FOOD AND DRINK

While there are some stops along the route with light refreshments, and some cafes and pubs to purchase food, these are intermittent and so please bring your own food and water for the day.

CAPTURING YOUR EXPERIENCE

We will be inviting creative responses to the pilgrimage which may contribute to our planned exhibition once both the UK and Japan activities have been completed. You are welcome to bring cameras, use your phone to capture sound, video and audio, or use any medium you choose. Details relating to this are included in the project information sheet as linked in the consent form.

USEFUL LINKS

Safety guidance from the Ramblers Association: https://www.ramblers.org.uk/safety

The Countryside Code: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code/the-countryside-code-advice-for-countryside-visitors

OS Map app download	**iOS/Apple/ iPhone**	**Google Store/ Android**

ABOUT THE PROJECT

This walk forms part of our broader project 'Pilgrimage and the Anthropocene' which investigates the history and archaeology of religious experience through the lens of pilgrimage, and using a phenomenological and internationally comparative approach.

The wider project focuses on two comparative pilgrimage routes: Norwich to Little Walsingham (UK) and Hase Temple to Ise Grand Shrine (Japan), at either end of Eurasia. By physically walking these routes, we will explore key themes relating to the experience of pilgrimage including landscape, infrastructure, and the social, physical and spiritual benefits of pilgrimage.

Scan to read the project leaflet

WHY WE ARE UNDERTAKING THIS WALK

Exploring the experience of pilgrimage

By both physically walking the routes involved and researching the termini of each, we hope to build a richer picture of how religion was experienced in the past through the practice of pilgrimage. From this, we will be producing written outputs including journal articles and publications.

Communicating the experience of pilgrimage

Following both walks, we plan to create an exhibition exploring the themes we research to help broader audiences understand the experience of pilgrimage for people in the past. We are also exploring how immersive technologies can be used to communicate archaeological landscapes to people who may not otherwise be able to access them.

Want to be involved in the exhibition? We will be inviting creative responses to your experience of the walk—speak to one of the team to find out more.

Analysing the experience of pilgrimage

Building on the extensive work undertaken by the Sainsbury Institute as part of the Archaeology 4 Wellbeing/Later Prehistoric Norfolk Project, we will also investigate how projects such as this can impact the wellbeing of people who take part. We will ask questions relating to your experiences before, during, and after the walk to contribute to this data set (further information has been provided in the Consent Information Sheet). Participation in this is entirely optional.

Accessing the experience of pilgrimage

Part of this project will also investigate how activities such as this can enhance tourism in rural areas in both the UK and Japan, and we will be working with tourism organisations in both places. We also intend to create an interactive map following the walk to capture some of the spaces, talks and activities we undertake for people who may want to complete the route in the future.

COMPARATIVE ROUTES

A key research strand of the project is investigating pilgrimage across cultures by focusing on two comparative routes—the Ise Honkaido (伊勢本街道) in Japan and Norwich to Walsingham in the UK. The following page shows some comparative images from both routes captured by the project team (John Falconer and Olivia Butler).

ISE HONKAIDO (伊勢本街道)

Hase Temple (長谷寺) to Ise Grand Shrine (伊勢神宮)

Most popular during the Edo period (1603–1868), this route is believed to be most faithful to the legendary journey of Princess Yamatohime-no-Mikoto (倭 姫 命) as she travelled to find a permanent place to enshrine Amaterasu (天照), goddess of the sun and mythical ancestor of the Imperial Family of Japan. The route links the Buddhist temple of Hasedera in Nara to the Shrine of Ise, the most venerated Shinto shrine in Japan.

We are grateful to be working in partnership with Hasedera, building on our previous collaboration for the exhibition Nara to Norwich held at the Forum, Norwich, in May 2024.

THE WALSINGHAM WAY

Norwich to Little Walsingham

Walsingham became a significant pilgrimage destination around the end of the 12th century with pilgrims travelling from all over Europe to visit the shrine of the Virgin Mary, established in the Holy House following a series of visions by Lady Richeldis de Faverches. The subsequent shrine attracted pilgrims from all over Europe during the medieval period. It was the second most visited in England after the shrine to Thomas Becket in Canterbury Cathedral.

We are grateful to be working in partnership with Norwich Cathedral for this project, as well as the support received from the churches along the route, Scilla Landale and Norfolk Churches Trust.

Pathways along the Ise Honkaido and the route to Walsingham

Shrine to Yamatohime-no-Mikoto in Maruyama Park

St Andrew's Church, Little Snoring

Part of the shrine complex at Ise Jingu Naikū

All Saints' Church, Stibbard, Norfolk

Signs along the Ise Honkaido and Walsingham Way

CHANGING SENSESCAPES OF THE WALSINGHAM WAY

We are walking a pilgrimage route that has been followed for centuries and, while many might share spiritual experiences with travellers of the past, our physical experiences will inevitably be very different. This is not least because of the changed physical environment, but also our reactions to it.

First, many medieval pilgrims would have seen the landscape from horseback, not on foot. They were travelling on unpaved roads which they shared with other people, packhorses and animal-drawn carts: post carriages/stage coaches did not exist here in medieval times. There would have been considerable noise and smells from this traffic, but very different from those today.

Although most of the contours of the land have not changed—except where road building and other modern construction has cut through them—much more land is now covered with buildings, infrastructures such as electricity pylons, paved roads, private gardens and large fields. In medieval times the land was all crown owned and under the management of manorial estates. The estates rented out areas to their tenants for agriculture which would have been strip farmed. Less productive areas such as heathland were designated as commons, free to use by tenants for water, grazing and gathering firewood, and often the focus for settlement.

Wood was needed for building and fuel, and population growth from the 11th to 13th centuries led to much wood clearance, although mainly in south Norfolk. Other woodlands were managed by coppicing.

Large herds of sheep would have been seen throughout the journey: it is estimated that there may have been more than 200,000 sheep in Norfolk between the 13th and 15th centuries. The commons were also used for grazing/foraging by the pigs, cattle, geese and other livestock owned by the tenants.

Our access today is more limited. We can follow roads or public footpaths, but are not allowed to cut across manorial land as medieval travellers might have done.

Apart from the domestic animals, the medieval traveller would have encountered a much greater profusion of wildlife, especially insects and birds. Today, we are very unlikely to see a kaleidoscope of butterflies in Norfolk, but this was probably a common sight for our medieval pilgrim. Wild boar, wolves and wild cats still populated the forests, herds of deer were managed by the estates and newly-introduced rabbits were farmed in large warrens. Red kites, marsh harriers and other birds of prey hunted from the skies.

The smellscape would certainly have been much more pungent, without the mix of car fumes or industry but with wood smoke and animal and human smells permeating the air. Our pilgrims might used plants as natural deodorants, and herbs such as yarrow or rosemary rubbed on their skin to repel biting insects but these would not have been able to mask the reek from tanneries, slaughterhouses and cesspits.

The medieval traveller would have experienced a more varied and immediate tactile environment: the constant feel of the horse; coarser clothing; the rough wood of inn furniture, and the presence of companions in the communal beds. The taste of their food, largely unprocessed and local, certainly might have rivalled ours in its robustness, but without the variety of flavours—although spices were increasingly used among the elite from the 13th century. Inns served dishes such as potage, a thick grain and vegetable stew, with hard cheese or sausage, and washed down with ale.

The lack of cars, planes and other mechanisation would have also meant a very different soundscape, the sound of the carts and animals on the road overlaid with bird song. This would have been punctuated by church bells, the blacksmith's anvil and the hubbub of inns.

In some places we can get a sense of the medieval landscape when not many buildings are visible except the manors, farms and church towers and spires—many churches are less than a mile apart and were then intervisible. But while most churches have survived, the many freestanding wayside crosses which also once punctuated the routes are now mainly lost.

We now also live in a very different physical state, with more effective remedies to prevent common diseases. Our pilgrims might have had, or certainly seen, people with a variety of conditions that are largely absent in many societies today, such as goitres, cleft lips and leprosy. They might have also suffered from TB or malaria—ague—endemic in much of medieval Norfolk.

There would have been many beggars, especially at churches and villages. And some of these people might have been on public display in the stocks required by every village and town following the Black Death to make an example of those refusing to work: with over 50% of the population killed in the pandemic, labour was in short supply.

Although we travel today in greater physical comfort, our modern sensescape is considerably depleted when compared to our medieval forebears.

We are interested in hearing more about your experience of our pilgrimage walk

As we move through the landscape, we invite you to think about your responses, how you feel, what you are sensing, and anything that is particularly memorable for you.

You can record your experience in a number of ways:

- Take pictures or videos at different points along the route
- Record sounds—you can do this through your phone
- Note down anything you can sense while walking - are there changes in smell? Do you notice different senses in different spaces? There are pages at the back of this booklet or you can type on your phone
- Capture your experience through drawing, painting, or any way you choose. We are flexible to what works best for you

We hope to have an online platform for you to submit responses as you walk - more details of this will be provided in the briefing at the start of each day.

PROJECT TEAM

We are delighted to welcome a panel of experts to take part in the walk who will be delivering talks on subjects relating to pilgrimage throughout the journey. If you have any specific interests that you would like to learn more about during the walk, please let us know and we can direct you to the best person.

MEG BERNSTEIN

Lecturer in Medieval History of Art, UEA

Meg Bernstein is Lecturer in Medieval Art History at UEA. Her research explores how buildings and artworks were experienced in their original contexts, engaging with sculpture, ritual, materiality, and the social life of parish churches. She is also interested in issues surrounding replication, ecocritical approaches, and artistic exchange in the North Sea world. Meg is the editor of *Towards an Art History of the Parish Church, 1200-1399*, an open-access volume on the art history of the parish church.

OLIVIA BUTLER

Digital Research and Project Co-ordinator, Sainsbury Institute

Olivia is digital research and project co-ordinator at the Sainsbury Institute. She is part of the *Nara to Norwich* team, having completed walks of the pilgrimage routes in both the UK and Japan. She leads on the digital strategy for the Institute, and will be capturing immersive video content and wellbeing data during the walk. Her background is in archaeology and art history with a focus on the Late Antique and Byzantine periods.

SOPHIE CABOT

Norwich Castle Museum

I have worked as an archaeologist and in heritage-led regeneration in Norwich for over 20 years, for nearly a decade at the late Norwich Heritage and Economic Regeneration Trust, where I developed Heritage Open Days in Norfolk, and the Norwich Blue Plaques Scheme.
More recently I have worked on two major NLHF funded projects; "Community Archives; Skills Support and Sustainability" at the Norfolk Record Office, and "The Marriotts Way Heritage Trail" for Norfolk County Council. I am Secretary of the Norfolk & Norwich Archaeological Society, and I have a special interest in Jewish heritage, especially the public understanding of the medieval Jewish community of Norwich. I am currently based at Norwich Castle Museum.

PETER COLES

Academic Associate, Sainsbury Institute

Peter Coles is an Academic Associate at the Sainsbury Institute, with a special interest in the cultural history of the mulberry tree, its key role in the global development of sericulture and the silk roads, as well as its unique contribution to the study of cultural heritage in Britain. He has been a Visiting Lecturer in Photography and Urban Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London since 2010. He is co-founder of the *Morus Londinium* citizen-science project to document and raise awareness of Britain's mulberry tree heritage.

KATY CUBITT

Professor Emerita of Medieval History, UEA

Katy Cubitt is Professor Emerita of Medieval History at UEA, which she joined in 2017 after a career of twenty years at the University of York. She is a historian of the early middle ages, particularly of the Christian church; her interests span England, the continent and its links to the Mediterranean world and the Byzantine Empire.

JOHN FALCONER

Photographer and Curator

John Falconer was formerly Lead Curator of Visual Arts at the British Library. His duties included responsibility for the Library's photographic collections, which are particularly strong on historical collections of India. He has published widely on the subject of photography in Asia and has also curated photographic exhibitions in India, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, China and elsewhere. He is now an independent scholar and writer.

SIMON KANER

Executive Director, Sainsbury Institute

Simon Kaner is is an archaeologist specialising in the prehistory of Japan. As well as being Executive Director since 2018, he is Head of the Centre for Archaeology and Heritage at the Sainsbury Institute, and Professor of Archaeology and Heritage at UEA. He is Project Director for the Institute's *Nara to Norwich* project, and has curated a number of exhibitions, including at the British Museum, the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, the Sainsbury Centre in Norwich, and Stonehenge Visitor Centre.

WILL NASH

Lecturer in Biological Sciences, UEA

Will Nash is an entomologist, evolutionary biologist and lecturer at the University of East Anglia. His research uses patterns in DNA to understand biodiversity, evolution and conservation, with a particular focus on bumblebees and other insects. From diving off the Norfolk coast to exploring the county's many wondrous terrestrial habitats, Will's own pilgrimage is a constant one: visiting Norfolk's wild places to encounter, celebrate and help safeguard what remains of their native biodiversity.

SUSAN WHITFIELD

Professor in Silk Road Studies, Sainsbury Institute

Susan Whitfield has been researching, travelling, lecturing and writing about the Silk Road for over three decades. She was curator of over 50,000 medieval Silk Road manuscripts at the British Library. During her 25 years there, she developed and directed an international collaboration between museums, libraries and other holders of Silk Road artefacts worldwide (idp.bl.uk). Susan is part of the *Nara to Norwich* project team and has led on the 'Sacred Landscapes' research branch of this, completing pilgrimages in both the UK and Japan.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Sainsbury Institute Office
For any questions relating to the project or arrangements prior to the walk

+44 (0) 1603 597507
sisjac@sainsbury-institute.org

READING LIST

In 1981, the Canadian anthropologist, filmmaker and scholar of Hindu pilgrimage, Alan Morinis, noted that: 'pilgrimage centres and activities have been a relatively neglected area of scholarly investigation.' He organized a meeting specifically to breach 'the barriers between scholars sharing an interest in journeys to sacred centres.' Less than five decades later his hopes have been realized: scholarly and popular writings on pilgrimage have proliferated, many breaching the barriers he mentioned. A very short list of accessible readings relevant to the Walsingham Way and East Anglia is given below. A longer list is being compiled on NaratoNorwich.org, but if you want any suggestions for further reading in the meantime, please get in touch.

And many thanks to our experts— Meg Bernstein, Peter Coles, Katy Cubitt, Sophie Cabot and Will Nash—for their suggestions.

Pilgrimage

Hurlock, Kathryn. *Holy Places: How Pilgrimage Changed the World*. Profile Books, 2025.
Kathryn Hurlock explores 19 pilgrimages across faiths worldwide, including Canterbury in Britain. Very useful for the wider context.

NaratoNorwich: Pilgrimage
https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/a94eff2749d84d6b8c14e041248de895
A section of our online exhibition looking at both Buddhist and Christian pilgrimage. We feature St Edmund and St Ethelreada.

Reader, I. *Pilgrimage: A very short introduction*. OUP, 2015.
What it says: a brief introduction to the history and concept of pilgrimage.

Solnit, Rebecca. *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*. Verso, 2022.
A more general study on the cultural history of walking. Chapter 4 considers pilgrimage.

Yarrow, S. 'Pilgrimage.' In *The Routledge History of Medieval Christianity* (pp. 158–170). Routledge, 2015.
Explores the spiritual, social, and economic dimensions of medieval Christian travel.

Walsingham Way: Its Context and Broader History

https://walsinghamway.blog/norwich-to-walsingham/
The Walsingham Way home page giving details of the route etc.

NB we will be making some short detours from the route given on this page to visit nearby churches thus making the route slightly longer. We will provide a revised map.

The books below discuss the shrine's founding and its 20th century revival. These are often available cheaply on secondhand bookstores online, such as Oxfam, Abe Books etc.

Bryden, J. *Behold the Wood: A History of the Student Cross Pilgrimage, 1948–1998*. London, 1998.

Dickinson, J. C. *The Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham*. Cambridge, 1956.
Dickinson revisits the historical evidence for the 1061 date traditionally given to the founding of the shrine by Gillett and others, and suggests a date around 1130 instead. The debate on this continues.

Gillett, H. M. *Walsingham: A History of the Famous Shrine*. London, 1946.

Stephenson, Colin. *Walsingham Way*. 2008 (rpt .of 1970 edition).
Colin Stephenson was Priest Administrator of the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham and tells the story of the restoration of the Shrine by his predecessor, Alfred Hope Patten.

Archaeology and history of Norfolk and East Anglia

Ashwin, Trevor. *An Historical Atlas of Norfolk*. Phillimore & Co, Ltd 2008.

Peter Wade-Martins, Susanna Wade-Martins, David Robertson. *A History of Norfolk in 100 Places*. Bittern Books, 2022.

Norfolk Heritage Explorer https://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/

Norfolk Industrial Archaeological Society http://www.norfolkia.org.uk/industrial-archaeology.html

For the **broader historical context** see:
Crawford, Sally. *Daily Life in Anglo-Saxon England*. Bloomsbury, 2026.

On Saint Edmund see**:**
https://visit-burystedmunds.co.uk/blog/explore-the-story-of-st-edmund

Norfolk Churches and Holy Sites

Although Nikolaus **Pevsner**'s guides remain authoritative (and churches we visit are in both volumes: *North-West and South Norfolk and North-East Norfolk and Norwich*), there are now many online and other resources:

For the churches we pass in Norwich on the other side of the Wensum (although we are not stopping at these), see the downloadable pdf:
Over-the-Water: The Medieval Churches of Norwich
https://tinyurl.com/5399cd4e

For churches in Norfolk more generally see:
Ayers, Brian, Clare Haynes, Sandy Heslop, and Helen Lunnon. *The Parish Churches of Medieval Norwich*. 2026.

And for an online guide:
Knott, Simon, *Churches of East Anglia: Norfolk*
http://www.norfolkchurches.co.uk/mainpage.htm

You can also find a brief introduction to many the churches we will visit on:
https://www.explorenorfolkuk.co.uk/churches-along-the-walsingham-way.html

Hungate have downloadable leaflets on **rood screens and stained glass**. The relevant ones are: Rood screen: 13, 14 ; Stained Glass: 4.
https://hungate.org.uk/trails/

Other Reading:

Bernstein, Meg, ed. *Towards an Art History of the Parish Church, 1200–1399*. Courtauld Books Online, 2021.
https://courtauld.ac.uk/research/research-resources/publications/courtauld-books-online/parish-church/

Burgess, Mike. *Wayside Crosses and the Walsingham Way*.
https://www.hiddenea.com/Appendix%20Three.htm

Cragoe, Carol Davidson. "The Custom of the English Church: Parish Church Maintenance in England before 1300." *Journal of Medieval History* 36, no. 1 (2010): 20–38.

Lunnon, Helen. *East Anglian Church Porches and Their Medieval Context*. Boydell, 2020.

Marks, Richard. *Image and Devotion in Late Medieval England*. Sutton Publishing, 2004.

Whyte, Nicola. 'Norfolk Wayside Crosses: Biographies of Landscape and Place.' In Heslop, T.A., Elizabeth Mellings and Margit Thøfner (eds.). *Art, Faith and Place in East Anglia: From Prehistory to the Present*. Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2012.

Landscape and Ecology

Baker, J. A. *Peregrine*. Harper-Collins, 1967.
Full of atmosphere —sky, fog, estuary, damp, fields, seasons, wildlife.

Cocker, Mark. *Claxton: Field Notes from a Small Planet*. Vintage, 2015.
Rooted in the Yare Valley near Norwich, this is built from short, attentive observations of birds, plants, insects, weather, trees and seasonal change

Goulson, Dave. *A Sting in the Tale: My Adventures with Bumblebees*. Vintage, 2014.
A very readable introduction to bumblebees, pollinators and insect conservation. Good for connecting pilgrimage through countryside, gardens, churchyards and field margins with the wider decline and restoration of pollinating insects.

Heslop, T.A., Elizabeth Mellings and Margit Thøfner (eds.). *Art, Faith and Place in East Anglia: From Prehistory to the Present*. Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2012.

Locker, M. *Landscapes of Pilgrimage in Medieval Britain*. Archaeopress, 2015.
https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvr43k82

McAlister, Erica. *The Secret Life of Flies*. The Natural History Museum, 2017.
Funny, vivid and very good at making an overlooked insect group feel ecologically important and bringing attention to all the tiny ecological work happening at ground level.

Williamson, Tom. *The Landscapes of Common Land: History and Ecology in Norfolk and Beyond*. Windgater Press, 2025.
Useful for thinking about Norfolk landscapes as both ecological and historical: commons, heaths, grazing, wetlands, land use and the long relationship between people and habitat. This feels particularly appropriate for our project because it avoids treating "nature" as separate from human history.

Women and Christian Pilgrimage

Chaucer, Geoffrey, 'The Wife of Bath' in *The Canterbury Tales*. Penguin.

Craig, Leigh Ann, *Wandering Women and Holy Matrons: Women as Pilgrims in the Later Middle Ages*. 2009.
The difficulties and experience of Christian pilgrimage for women 1300-1500.

MacKenzie, Victoria. *For Thy Great Pain Have Mercy on My Little Pain*. Bloomsbury, 2023.
A short, fictionalized (and award-winning) recounting of the meeting between Marjory Kempe and Julian of Norwich, and their lives leading up to this.

Morrison, Susan Signe. *A Medieval Woman's Companion*. Oxbow, 2015.
The TLS reviewer wrote: 'The companion offers a surprising peephole into the everyday life of both medieval women and men for anyone who is interested in the period. It also serves to revise many of our modern preconceptions about the Middle Ages, particularly with regard to gender.'

Rosser, Susan. "Æthelthryth: a Conventional Saint?". *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*. 79 (3) (1997): 15–24. doi:10.7227/BJRL.79.3.4.

Etheldreda (Æthelthryth, Ediltrudis, Audrey) (d.679), queen, foundress and abbess of Ely.
https://www.elycathedral.org/about/history-heritage/st-etheldreda

ROUTE NOTES: DAY 1

Church / religious site Ecological site Site of interest

Archaeological site Cross

1. Norwich Cathedral and The Close

Norwich Cathedral, dedicated to the Holy Trinity, was both the seat of the Bishop of Norwich and a Benedictine Monastery until the dissolution of the monasteries in 1548. It had been founded in 1096 by Herbert de Losinga (c.1054—1119). He had travelled to Rome in 1094 and, on his return, transferred the episcopal see from Thetford to Norwich, becoming the first Bishop of Norwich. Work was completed by 1145, although there were many later improvements and rebuildings.

Prior's Hall, where we meet to start the walk, was built around 1284 as the Prior's lodging. It became the Deanery and was adapted during the 16th and 17th centuries to increase the residential space.

The cathedral building opposite the Hall originally comprised the old refectory and an Infirmary, with the Infirmary Garden between them. The 12th-century Infirmary was demolished in 1804 to improve the view from the Deanery, but the garden and other parts survive in the mid-19th century building now on the site. This is the home of the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Culture (**SISJAC**).

We begin our pilgrimage walking out of the cathedral grounds through the **Erpingham Gate** (c.1420), with its statue of Sir Thomas Erpingham, the benefactor, and carvings of 12 female saints on the outer moulding and 12 male saints on the inner. Among the former is Ethelreada (836-39): we encounter her again later.

We walk down to the River Wensum at **Fye Bridge**, a crossing dating to the 10th century, and into Norwich-over-the-Water (*Ultra Aquam)*, home to many medieval churches [see trail leaflet]. The walk rejoins and crosses back over the river, now flowing north, and leaves the medieval city of Norwich: **Coslany Gate** on Oak Street was demolished in 1808. We join **Marriott's Way**.

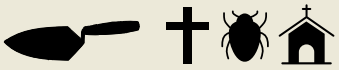
This Greenway for walkers and cyclists is named after William Marriott (1857–1943), Chief Engineer and Manager of the Midland and Great North Railway. It follows two disused railway lines, the Great Eastern (GE) from Aylsham to Themelthorpe and the Midland and Great Northern (MG&N) from Themelthorpe to Norwich. These lines were joined together in 1960 by a piece of track called the Themelthorpe Curve but were closed soon after.

Along the route there are notable remains of industrial heritage including remains of the platform at **Hellesdon.** The sculptures used as mile markers along the route were made by Nigel Barnett and John Behm from old railway tracks.

Excavations along Highham Street to the west have shown evidence of occupation since the early 14th century, including businesses such as tanneries and butcheries. The bone remains give an idea of the wide range of animals—domesticated and wild—and fish, eaten and otherwise used by the medieval occupants.

Marriott's Way is an important ecological corridor and includes protected areas such as the Norfolk Wildlife Trust site at **Sweetbriar Marshes**, a relic of the wet meadows that were once ubiquitous along the Wensum.

2. Costessey



Leaving the boundary of Norwich we enter the parish of Costessey, pronounced Cossey. To the east, on the other bank of the Wensum, is Hellesdon with its church of St Mary. A **medieval cross**, now in its churchyard, was one of many which marked parish boundaries. Another, further east, marked where the Kings Way entered Norwich.

The path comes to the confluence of the Rivers Tud and Wensum where the **Costessey Fish Farm** to the right, a conservation site run by the Environment Agency, provides a home for the endangered Black Poplar and Marsh Carpet Moth.

On the left is what may be a **henge**: a circular or oval earthen enclosure dating from the Neolithic or early Bronze Age. The position is similar to Arminghall, a larger timber circle and henge about three miles south of Norwich which was investigated by SISJAC in 2022 as part of the *Later Prehistroic Norfolk Project*. More prehistoric evidence from the parish of Costessey includes the sites of three burnt mounds and three ring ditches, along with a scattering of Bronze Age metalwork, the most noteworthy being a hoard of Late Bronze Age socketed axes. There is also some evidence of the Iron Age including pottery and a coin.

Just after this we leave Marriott's Way, passing the sites of 19th-century water and windmills to visit the village of Costessey. The church is dedicated to St Edmund (841–869), patron saint and king of East Anglia: we will encounter him several more times on the route, especially on Day 2.

St Edmund's Church dates from the 14th (west tower) and 15th centuries (chancel screen and rood beam), with many later alterations and additions, including the 17th-century pulpit, 18th-century bell stage, and 19th-century benches. There is a memorial to the Jemingham family of Costessey Hall (which was largely demolished in 1925), who retained their Catholic faith after the Dissolution.

In the 19th-century, the local Gunton's brickyard produced decorated moulded bricks known as cosseyware. They were widely used in local architecture and can be seen on a tombchest in the churchyard.

The plaque outside the south porch commemorates the ten members of the USAAF 564 Bomb Squadron whose plane crashed in Carr's Hill Wood on the 7th March 1945: there are several WWII airfields shared by the RAF and USAAF in Norfolk and many similar memorials will be seen on the walk.

3. Drayton

Returning to Marriotts's Way we cross the Wensum on an A-framed **steel railway bridge** to enter the parish of Drayton. Archaeological finds in Drayton include a few prehistoric pieces such as late Palaeolithic flint blades, a range of Mesolithic axes and some Bronze Age objects. Discoveries from a more recent era include a 5th-6th century cremation cemetery located on a hillside overlooking the Wensum.

To the east are the remains of **Drayton Lodge,** a house associated with Sir John Fastolf, the inspiration for Shakespeare's Falstaff. It may have been later used as a warrener's lodge: rabbits had been introduced to Britain in the 12th century and were farmed in large warrens.

Entering the village, we pass a **14th-century cross**, restored in 1879.

Just beyond, St Margaret's Church dates back to 1198, although with substantial 19th-century

rebuildings after the tower collapsed in 1850. The 15th-century south porch has medieval graffiti. There is 16th-century German glass in two windows on the south of the nave, one showing Anna leaning on her stick at the Presentation in the Temple, while the other depicts Mary meeting her cousin Elizabeth when they are both pregnant. They were installed here in the 1960s by King & Son of Norwich.

The church also has a Japanese connection: William Eaton Junior, Rector at St. Margaret's from 1640 until 1662, was half Japanese. His grave is in the churchyard.

We leave Drayton and the river, to head through the outskirts of Taverham – a medieval unit of administration mentioned in the Domesday book, although the original village is by the river to the west.

During the construction of the bridge crossing the A1270 a large ditch was discovered with pottery and other finds dating it Middle to Late Bronze/Iron Age. Several other sites were discovered during the building of this road.

The A1270 is on the course of one of the major routes between Norwich and Walsingham, taken by King Edward when he visited the shrine in 1469: he completed the journey in one day, but on horseback. What was another major route for Walsingham pilgrims is now the A1067 from Norwich to near Fakenham.

4. Attlebridge

We now enter the parish of Attlebridge ('Aetla's bridge'), and turn west to leave Marriott's Way and follow the parish's southern boundary. The wooded area to the south is **Walsingham Plantation**, so-called because of the medieval pilgrimage route.

We enter woodland and climb gently into the Deighton Hills and through **Juniper Valley**. This is a belt of old, possibly ancient, woodland that can be seen on Faden's map of 1797.

Crossing over the A1067 the route goes through **Old Hall Farm**; the house has some surviving 17th-century brickwork and was partially surrounded by a medieval three-sided moat which was infilled in the 1970s. Archaeological excavations here discovered **Neolithic/early Bronze Age pottery.** We cross the Wensum on a footbridge. The original river crossing is in Attlebridge village to the north and dates to before the Norman Conquest in 1066. The medieval bridge survives and was in use for traffic until 1971: it is now a footbridge.

5. Ringland

The walk continues up the west side of the Wensum valley to the village of Ringland ('the newly-cultivated land of Rymi's people') and St Peter's Church. This has a particularly fine 15th-century, angel-adorned, hammerbeam nave roof, partially hidden by false vaulting. St Peter's, like most of the churches we visit, is an amalgam of different centuries. The tower dates from the 13th century, the chancel from the 14th, and much of the remainder is 15th century, with significant Victorian restoration. Like many Norfolk buildings, it is made of flint.

There are two flint mines in the parish, dating from the Neolithic, the stone revealed thanks to the erosion caused by the river. Numerous flint artefacts have been discovered, along with a rare Neolithic floor surface found at the bottom of a gravel pit in the Ringland Hills to the south. Flint pieces—including flakes, scrapers and a single polished axe made from Lincolnshire flint—were neatly arrayed on its surface.

Just to the west of the church lies a small area of common-land, known as **Church Hill Common**, the site of a windmill in the late 18th century.

We end day 1 with refreshments in the village hall.

ROUTE NOTES: DAY 2

We leave Ringland along the wooded side of the Wensum valley, the woods containing many trees recorded in the Ancient Tree Inventory: particularly notable next to the roadside is a hazel with a girth of 6.5m. We pass the road to Morton Hall, originally built in 1590 with 19th-century extensions. The medieval hall was occupied by the army during WWII and subsequently demolished. The road continues past the hall to the medieval bridge at Attlebridge – mentioned in Day 1.

1. Weston Longville

We are now in Weston Longville. The oldest structure in the parish is to the northeast: a Neolithic barrow with a **Bronze Age barrow** on top. Also found nearby in 1852 was a ceramic urn containing a hoard of between 200–300 Iceni silver coins (c.10 BC to AD 47).

All Saints is mainly medieval, with a 13th-century tower, but with much of the rest built in the 14th century and with a porch added in the 15th century. Two pre-Reformation bells survive among the present six; their ringing appreciated by the famous diarist, Parson James Woodeforde. Rector from 1776 until his death in 1803, his voluminous diaries (which remained unpublished until the 20th century) paint a vivid picture of contemporary life in the village and are a major historical source for 18th-century English life..
There are several surviving pieces of medieval art in the church including:

- a carving of the crucifixion embedded in the stair near the font;
- a late medieval screen painted with images of the twelve Apostles and with spandrals depicting dragon legends of Saint George and Saint Margaret;
- wall paintings of St John the Baptist holding the Lamb of God and St John the Evangelist holding his poisoned chalice;
- and a wall painting of the Jesse Tree (i.e. family tree of Christ) of about 1350–70.

There is also some 15th-century stained glass in the tracery lights of three south aisle windows, typical of the Norwich school.

One of the memorials in the church is a Roll of Honour to those members of the 466th Bomber Group USAAF lost in WWII — Attlebridge airfield, southwest of the village, was shared by the RAF and USAAF.

We leave the village and come to the edge of a large, enclosed parkland associated with Weston, with a 16th-century red-brick manor-house. Historical sources mention an earlier moated timber framed structure. Some of the woodland within the park is believed to be medieval. The park is now the Dinosaur Adventure Park and a golf course.

2. Lyng

We enter the parish of Lyng and, after passing three roadside veteran oaks, take a track to **Wrong's Covert**, now home to a forest school next to the river—'covert' generally indicates a wooded area where foxes were hunted. It is possible that the old route followed the river more closely leading to a medieval priory, but we have to return to the road to reach it.

A ruin in the middle of a field is probably the site of a medieval Benedictine priory founded before 1176, when it was transferred to Thetford. But some nuns remained on the site, perhaps maintained as a grange (an outlying farm or estate established by a nunnery to provide food and income): the Prioress of St George's, Thetford held a fair at this location in 1287. By 1730, the ruins of the chapel are described, called **St Edmund's Chapel**—the site we see today—but the rest of the nunnery can no longer be traced.

A path follows the edge of the field and crosses the road to enter **'The Grove'**, an ancient trackway (often called a hollow-way), leading up the side of the the valley. Folklore tells of ancient religious practices and hauntings by phantom nuns—during the 19th century schoolchildren were let out early in winter so that they could walk through the wood before dark. It is also connected in legend to a skirmish between St (King) Edmund and the Danes which left the King defeated and his soldiers' decapitated bodies strewn along the high ground—their spirits are also said to haunt 'The Grove'. St Edmund is said to have retreated safely and escaped to Castle Acre.

Adjacent to the path lies **The Great Stone of Lyng**, a large glacial erratic and a rarity in Norfolk, brought by the ice sheets possibly from as far as Scandinavia. It is also the focus of local legends, among them that it bleeds, that birdsong cannot be heard nearby, and that treasure is buried beneath it.

Across the river here is the **Sparham Pools nature reserve**, a former gravel pit now home to kingfisher, goosander and terns and bordered by many veteran alder and oaks.

There is also a veteran oak in the churchyard of **St Margaret's**. The church has a 13th-century tower and font, a 15th-century nave and an impressive hammerbeam roof. The altar-cloth, displayed in an alarmed case, was made in the 19th century from 15th century vestments. The east window has a stained glass image of St Margaret with her dragon curled around her feet: it was designed by Michael Charles Farrar-Bell (1911–93).

To the east is **Mill House**, the site of an 18th-century paper mill. Destroyed in a riot in 1832, it was rebuilt and continued in use until 1865.

3. Elsing

Leaving the village to the southwest we enter Elsing, passing through an area of heath and ancient common land to reach the church of **St Mary the Virgin**. This was built in the early 14th century entirely in Decorated Style at the behest of Sir Hugh Hastings (c.1310-47). His grave is in the middle of the chancel topped with an almost life-size brass effigy, one of the most important in England. Originally fully gilded, with a painted coat of arms and enamel decoration, this is perhaps the earliest brass in England containing coloured glass. When his tomb was opened by archaeologists in September 1978, his remains showed that he was about 5 feet 10 inches tall at his death and had evidence of injuries sustained in warfare: damaged incisors from a blow to the jaw and osteoarthritis in the shoulder and elbow.

The font, with its traceried panels, pinnacled by flying buttresses and a crocketted spire, is c. 1340. Infra-red scanning has revealed 15th-century paintings on the rood screen.

To the south is Elsing Hall, a 15th-century fortified manor house restored by Thomas Jekyll in 1852.

4. Swanton Morley

We now enter the large parish of **Swanton Morley**, the final leg for today. The topography is hilly – for Norfolk: small tributaries of the Wensum have created undulating small valleys.

Horse equipment dating from the 1st centuries BC/AD have been discovered west of Elsing Hall including a three-link bit thought to have originated in Yorkshire (and now in Norwich Castle Museum) and an enamelled bit. These suggest a high-status Iron Age presence in the vicinity.

Two ceremonial Roman parade helmets were dredged from the River Wensum in the 1940s and 1950s, along with timber piles that may have belonged to a **Roman bridge heading toward a fort**. The fort itself is no longer visible but its location is suggested by aerial viewing of cropmarks. Late Iron Age and Roman coins have also been discovered, the assemblage suggesting that the military was here during the reign of Nero (54–68) and the more local Catuvellauni uprising of AD 47 and that of the Icenis led by Boudica in AD 60-1.

Looking north across the Wensum we can see the round tower of **St Mary's, Bylaugh**. The church sits in isolation as a result of Bylaugh village's shrinkage in the mid-14th century: it had been recorded in the Domesday Book (1086) as a 14-household settlement held by Alan of Brittany. It was also significant in the earlier period as attested by discoveries made by metal detectorists. These include an **Iron Age** Iceni coin, **Roman** pottery brooches, and a 9th-century box clasp showing a Valkyrie welcoming a warrior on his horse to Valhalla (Norwich Castle Museum, NWHCM : 1990.199).

We end the day at **All Saints' Church**, looking over the river and village from its position on a bluff: this makes its tower with its six bells an ideal site for the free Wi-Fi transmitter. It is also home to over 100 **Natterer's bats**.

The late 14th-15th century building is one of the earliest examples of Perpendicular Style in East Anglia. By the east window is a slit giving a view into the former ossuary, later used as a vestry. Also worth noting are the grooves by the font: it has been suggested that these made by parishioners scraping dust to be used in medical potions, as the structure of a church was thought to have healing qualities.

There is relatively modern stained glass— the 1920s depiction of St Agnes, St Andrew and St Margaret, typical of the studio of Powell & Sons (Whitefriars Glass), active from the 17th century until 1980. They also produced the arrangement of shields in the east window in the 1940s. There is also a 1991 window by the stained glass artists Glenn Carter commemorating the role of RAF Swanton Morley in WWII: we pass the airfield, now part of Robertson Barracks, tomorrow.

ROUTE NOTES: DAY 3

1. Hoe and Worthing

Starting at Swanton Morley church on the hill, we walk northwest following the course of the river. The road skirts **Billingford Fishing Lakes and Country Park**, home to a variety of wildlife, including Muntjac deer, foxes, herons, grebes, kingfishers and many species of butterflies and dragonflies.

We now enter the parish of Hoe and Worthing, amalgamated in 1935. Much of the former parish of Worthing is occupied by the airstrip of the **WWII Swanton Morley** airfield (now known as Robertson Barracks), the largest grass landing strip in Europe. The adjacent barracks are in Swanton Morley.

A Roman helmet was discovered in the river by Riverside Farm, just on the parish boundary, when the river was being dredged in 1947. Made of copper alloy with decorations of sea dragons and eagles, it dates from the early 3rd century, possibly coming from the Danube Valley. It is now in the Norwich Castle Museum (NWHCM: 1947.152). A Roman road runs north of the river.

We take a short detour south along the Blackwater tributary, to the small round-towered **St Margaret's Church**. This is the first of several round-towered churches, so characteristic of Norfolk, that we are visiting: Norfolk has 124 such churches out of the national total of c.185 (another 38 are in Suffolk). It was previously though that round towers were built due to a lack of suitable stone for cornering, but as several people have noted, it is just as easy to turn a corner in flint as it is with ashlar or carstone.

St Margaret's tower and nave date from the 11th or 12th century, with the tower reduced in height in the 18th century. It has a Norman south door. The chancel has been destroyed and the east end of the nave bricked up. The church now contains a small display of bell-ringing equipment.

The medieval village was probably to the south and south-east of the church but is not mentioned in the Domesday survey. An 11th-century date for the first village seems most probable on archaeological grounds. We walk back north to the present-day village, cross the early **20th-century bridge**—the Blackwater crossing was previously by a ford—and pass a large watermill and the site of a former tannery.

2. North Elmham

The bridge brings us into North Elmham and we pass the **station** on the disused line of the Wymondham to Wells railway (1849–1989), a section of which is now being restored. The railway was largely used for daily milk trains.

Less than a km to the south at **Spong Hill** is the largest early medieval (410-1066) pagan cremation cemetery in England. There was also evidence for occupation during both the Mesolithic (11,500-4000 BC) and Neolithic (4000-2400 BC) periods. Spong Hill cremation cemetery was first discovered in the 18th century. It was fully excavated between 1972 and 1984 to recover as much as possible in advance of the dual threats of gravel extraction and agricultural ploughing. Over two thousand cremation burials and fifty-seven inhumations were archaeologically excavated, dating between the fifth and sixth centuries. Given its size, this must

have been the main burial ground for a significant territory.

Beside the cemetery, evidence for a settlement was discovered with a number of hall structures and sunken floored buildings. Many decorated urns were recovered, including a unique example with a lid in the shape of a seated person, known as Spong Man, now on display in Norwich Castle Museum (NWHCM : 1994.192.1) and part of our Nara to Norwich exhibition.

Elsewhere within the parish are remains of **burial mounds from the Bronze Age**, now flattened, surviving only as ring-ditches. A Late Bronze Age hoard containing axes, spearheads, a sword and ingots was found just to the north of Spong Hill, close to the southern end of the village.

We now turn north to **St Mary's Church**, a large and fine example of the Perpendicular Style, so common in Norfolk, dating largely from the 15th century but altered and refaced in the 19th. There is evidence of an earlier structure: the vaulted south porch and nave date to the 13th century.

Inside, the alternating round and octagonal pillars of the arcades form a striking feature. The rood screen has a dado of 24 panels, 17 with painted figures showing male saints on one side and female on the other. The spandrals show various scenes including St George and the dragon.

There is some 14th-century stained glass while the 15th-century carved bench ends include depictions of a giraffe and a chained bear.

The ancient ash tree at the entrance to the churchyard has a girth of 6m.

To the north of the church is the site of **North Elmham Cathedral**. It would have originally been a wooden structure and we know from historical sources that it dates from around 670. The See of East Anglia collapsed in the mid-9th century, and was reestablished in 955, transferred to Thetford in 1071 and then to Norwich in 1095. Excavations between 1967 and 1972 in Elmham Hall's New Park (on the other side of the road) revealed evidence of activity from around 650 with a sequence of ditches, tracks, two wells, and several buildings from the 7th to 9th centuries, including a possible bakehouse. These suggest a community associated with the cathedral.

A manorial chapel was built on the site of the cathedral by the first Bishop of Norwich, Herbert de Losinga (c.1054–1119), between 1091–1119. It later became a moated fortified manor and a hunting retreat for Henry Le Dispenser (c.1341–1406). Dispenser was Bishop from 1370, consecrated in Rome, and became known as the 'fighting bishop' due to his part in suppressing the Peasants' Revolt in Norfolk at the Battle of North Walsham in 1381.

We walk through part of the grounds of the 19th-century Elmham house, built using some of the timber from the earlier building, passing the circular brick dovecote and the former game larder. The latter has now been converted into a **chapel**. Continuing north we enter Gateley.

3. Gately

Gately has some **prehistoric finds** and some small evidence of **Romano-British activity**.

Soon after entering the parish, we make a short detour to **St Helen's Church**, which lies among farm buildings. This is a mainly Perpendicular Style 15th-century church, but with a round-headed south doorway formed from ironbound conglomerate suggesting a much earlier doorway, possibly pre-Norman: the present north and south doors are from c. 1300. Inside there is a rood screen with paintings showing four female saints on one side and four male on the other. These include local figures such as the Mistress of Ridibowne, a local folk saint about whom almost

nothing is known. Ridibowne was probably either Redbowne in Lincolnshire or Redbowne in Hertfordshire.

The parish contains little else besides the early 18th-century Gately Hall to the southwest of the church.

We continue north crossing the disused railway and a road to Sennowe Park. This crosses the river at a **highly protected chalk river stretch** running from the bridge to Great Ryburgh Mill. This stretch of river underwent a major restoration scheme in 2011 to improve local wildlife and natural water flow. A survey less than a year later identified 31 aquatic and marginal plant species including several associated with chalk streams such as *Berula erecta* (lesser water-parsnip), *Callitriche Spp*. (water starwort), *Veronica anagallisaquatoc/ cantenata* (water speedwell) and *Catabrosa aquatic* (Whole-grass). A 2013 electro-fishing survey recorded 705 fish representing 12 species: 107 fish of seven species were caught in 2012 when the habitat was still quite bare following restoration. Insect and bird life has also increased.

Shortly after we reach Great Ryburgh.

4. Great Ryburgh

This is the western of a pair of medieval parishes now amalgamated in Ryburgh (Rye-town). Little Ryburgh, on the eastern side of the Wensum was located in a different Domesday Hundred.

An exceptional **medieval graveyard** was discovered in 2016 only 100m from the church and next to the river. The water-logged conditions contributed to the preservation of 81 coffins made from hollowed-out oak trees and 6 plank-lined graves. The presence of wooden grave markers and the east-west alignment of the coffins support the interpretation of the site as an early Christian burial ground. This has also led the excavators to identify a timber structure uncovered at the site as an early church or chapel.

The cemetery has been tentatively dated to the mid-7th to mid-9th centuries. It may represent an early monastic community: the lack of grave goods other than pins suggests that these were early examples of the new Christian rites of burial. There is also little differentiation between individuals when compared to the richly furnished burials of the preceding two centuries.

The round tower and the west wall of the nearby **St Andrew's Church** possess features of pre- and post-Norman conquest date. Constructing round towers in flint requires considerable skill and likely became a stylistic expression of local masons: this one is mainly 12th century with some earlier work. St Andrew's continued to be remodelled throughout the medieval period with the addition of a 14th-century octagonal tower top and, as with so many Norfolk Churches, a number of both Decorated and Perpendicular insertions.

The 19th-century work was done by Sir John Ninian Comper (1864–1960) and by James (b.1904) and Lilian Dagless (b.1902), the children of a builder from Walsingham. They were also responsible for the altar and reredos for the Chapel of St Catherine and the golden canopy for the wooden statue of Our Lady in the Catholic Shrine.

Just to the north of the church is the site of the former **Ryburgh Hall**, a monastic manor house with a moat and fish ponds. Archaeological work here has uncovered signs of more early medieval activity, along with a range of medieval and post-medieval objects, including an ampulla, or pilgrim's badge.

We end the day at the church.

ROUTE NOTES: DAY 4

Leaving Great Ryburgh by the bridge across the Wensum, we pass the remains of **All Saints**, the former church of **Little Ryburgh** on Clay Hill to the north. This was a 12th century building, abandoned in the 18th century when the two parishes were brought together. It is the first of three abandoned churches we pass today.

1. Stibbard

We enter Stibbard as we approach the A1067 which, as mentioned previously, follows much of the course of the old Walsingham Way and soon reaches the market town of Fakenham to the west.

A significant **Late Bronze Age hoard** was discovered nearby by workmen in 1836 while cutting a drainage ditch. It included 80 looped palstave axes, 10 spearheads and some unfinished castings. All the objects derived from just three moulds and are now in the British Museum (eg.1866,0627.38) and Norwich Castle Museum.

The Ploughman, a life-size welded steel statue created in 1979, is by the artist Ros Newman (1939–2021). And the village is also now home to the cartoonist and sculptor Annie Tempest.

Parts of the tower of **All Saints' Church** probably date to the 12th century with the rest dating from the 14th and 15th centuries . The 19th-century restoration was by the eminent architect William Butterfield (1814–1900). The rood beam is original, although coloured by Butterfield. The south aisle was designated a Chapel of Remembrance after the First World War, *in proud memory of our men who died for the Empire 1914–1919*.

2. Fulmodeston

We continue into the parish of Fulmodeston passing close to the remains of a **medieval moated manor** to the east, one of at least six moated sites in the amalgamated parish. The boulder clay geology of this part of Norfolk was conducive to moat building. Such moats often surrounded buildings and sometime masonry remains are in evidence.

The present parish was formed from the amalgamation of Clipstone, Croxton, Fulmodestone and Barney, each of which are mentioned in the Domesday Book, and we pass two more churches abandoned in 1880s as the new church, halfway between, took over their responsibilities. The first is **St. Mary's**. It was unroofed in the early 20th century, listed in 1959, and then left to the elements. A number of metal finds, including Viking objects, and some pottery from the parish more generally attest to post Roman through to pre-Norman settlement(s) here. The c.1300 tower and perpendicular nave are now covered in ivy and access restricted by brambles and nettles.

Walking a little way west and bypassing the new church we pass the remains of **St John the Baptist Church** in Croxton, possibly dating to the 11th or 12th century, with an east window dating to around 1300 and the remaining windows to the 15th century.

We continue west, passing the site of a recent archaeological excavation carried out in advance

of cable-laying associated with the Dudgeon Windfarm project. A 5th– 6th century inhumation **cemetery** was discovered here, dug into and around a bronze age round barrow or ring ditch. Fifty-eight individual graves were found with a range of grave goods including brooches, beads, rings, spearheads and knives.

On the other side of the road is **Croxton Mill,** the site of a post mill built some time before 1803. The sails powered two pairs of French burr stones and a flour mill. When advertised to be let in 1837, there was an adjacent bakehouse. By 1875 an iron windshaft had been fitted.

A complex of crop marks has been identified from an aerial survey to the northwest. Consisting of several rectangular barrows, a kite-shaped enclosure and what appears to be a cursus—possibly a ceremonial route—it is probably of the Neolithic period (4000-2400 BC) although the square barrows may be Roman.

3. Kettlestone

We enter Kettlestone soon after, bounded by the River Wensum on its southwest and the River Stiffkey to the northeast. The deserted medieval village of Pensthorpe sits near the river in the southwest near what is now **Pensthorpe Natural Park**, a 700-acre reserve supporting a mix of native wild animals and captive species.

A number of 5th and 6th century cremation pots have been discovered just to its north, along with metalwork, bone artefacts and glass beads indicating that the bronze age barrows were reused in the early medieval period, a relatively common practice.

The village, and the deserted village of Pensthorpe, are mentioned in Domesday, as is the church of **All Saints**, to which we make a detour. It has a 14th-century octagonal tower, one of about six such churches in Norfolk, all roughly contemporary. Much of the rest of the church was rebuilt in the 15th century in the Perpendicular Style, but slightly obscured by the architect Frederick Preedy's 1869-71 restoration, which rebuilt the porch and chancel and replaced the roofs.

About sixty metres to the west of the church a 16th-century farmhouse has jetties or overhangs on the first floor and the attic.

The village also has areas designated as **Roadside Nature Reserves (RNR)**. Since the mid-1990s, Norfolk County Council (NCC) identified 300 RNRs, roughly equivalent to the area of 57 football pitches. NCC writes that they protect over 2,300 species of conservation concern that are rare, threatened, or legally protected across the county.

4. Little Snoring

We continue across a main road to Little Snoring (the place of a people who followed a man called Snear), a parish rich in archaeological finds from the Iron Age onwards. Much of this activity has been discovered in the fields surrounding **St Andrew's Church**. Highlights include a Borre style Viking pendant (British Museum 1999,1001.1) and a gilded bronze disc brooch with a cross at its centre, both dating from the 10th century.

The parish was held by the King in 1086 and probably had about 25 households, putting it on the larger side of vills. There was a large common to the east. Adjoining is **Thursford Wood**, one of the few remaining ancient woodlands in Norfolk, containing some of the county's oldest oaks, estimated to be over 500 years old.

Just before the church we pass **Hill House**, a two-storey farmhouse dating from around 1700, reputed to have been in the same family for some 300 years. It possesses a brick and flint set of Dutch gables and a black glazed pantile roof. There are several other 17th-century houses in the village, including Green Farmhouse, Manor Cottages and The Old Forge.

St Andrew's Church is on a hill to the north of the village. Its largely 11th-century round tower has a Norman archway to the door, made of an unusual combination of massive iron conglomerate or carstone. Unusually, it is detached from the remainder of the 12th-century church. Unlike Bramfield in Suffolk, also with a detached tower, this tower shows evidence of having once been joined to the nave. It has also been suggested that there were once two churches on this site, as can be seen at Reepham.

Northeast of the church is an extant moated site now surrounding a 17th-century **rectory**. Beyond this is **Little Snoring Airfield**. Established in 1943, it used by Mosquito and Lancaster squadrons during WWII, and remains open for general aviation.

5. Great Snoring

The route from Little to Great Snoring follows the road as it becomes a hollow way. The crossing of the River Stiffkey marks the entrance to the village. In passing between the two Snorings you also move between two ancient hundreds: Little lies in Gallow and Great in North Greenhoe.

Today Great Snoring is a small parish but was significant in Domesday: held by the King, it is recorded as having a population of around 31 households.

About 1km to the east of the village there appears from archaeological investigations to have been a **Roman settlement**, with a range of materials including a floor to a Roman building discovered during a small excavation.

About 400m upstream and south from the bridge over the Stiffkey, lava and millstone has been dredged from the river, along with quantities of flint found on the nearby banks, all suggesting the location of a mill, perhaps one of the two noted in the parish in the Domesday Book.

To the southwest of the bridge are the earthworks of a large set of ditches with a pond at their centre and connected to the river. These are probably medieval fishponds, possibly attached to an older rectory.

St Mary's Church mainly dates form the 13th to 15th centuries. The five-light east window marks the transition between Early English and Decorated styles. The tower, clerestories and aisles are all Perpendicular. The rood screen inside, plastered over during the Reformation, has been restored. There is some 15th-century stained glass in the upper lights of the east window showing angels, some playing musical instruments. Also notable is a 13th century font.

There are the scant remains of a medieval wayside **cross** beside the path leading to the **Old Rectory**. The Rectory was originally a manor house built either for Sir Ralph Shelton in 1500-10 or for his son around 1525, though the house was wholly altered in the 18th century. It is built from brick and has similarities to the very impressive manor house at East Barsham only about one mile to the west. It was originally a polygonal arrangement around a courtyard but only one and a half sides were completed. It still possesses an interesting series of decorated plaques and turrets with gothic brickwork.

There are also two noteworthy trees at the exit from the churchyard: a horse chestnut and a sweet chestnut, both with girths over 5m.

6. Houghton St Giles

We leave the village to the west, diverting from the modern Walsingham Way, to reach Houghton St Giles, the site of **St Giles' Church**, and the National Catholic Shrine of Our Lady at the Slipper Chapel.

The church was largely restored in the 1870s by the important domestic architect William Eden Nesfield (1835–1888) and contains a 15th-century rood screen.

The Slipper Chapel was built in 1352 as the last stop for pilgrims before reaching Walsingham. Possibly so-called because, traditionally, pilgrims would remove their shoes to walk the last part barefoot. It might have been dedicated to Saint Catherine. After the Reformation, it became successively a poor house, a forge, a barn and even a cow byre. In 1894 the ruin was bought by Charlotte Pearson Boyd (1837–1906), a convert to Catholicism. She restored the church and gave it to the Diocese of Northampton for Catholic use.

In 1934 the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham at Kings Lynn was translated by order of the Archbishop of Westminster to the Slipper Chapel. Cardinal Bourne led the translation pilgrimage, accompanied by Bishop Youens of Northampton and thousands of pilgrims. At the dedication of the new statue (the old one remains in the church at Kings Lynn) he declared the chapel to be the National Shrine of Our Lady. **The Chapel of the Holy Spirit** was built beside the Slipper Chapel four years later as a place for pilgrims to light candles for their intentions.

The Roman Catholic National Shrine of Our Lady (Slipper Chapel) houses a wooden statue originally carved in Oberammergau, Germany, which was blessed by Pope Leo XIII in 1897.

From here, it is a short walk along the dismantled line of the Wymondham to Wells railway, to Walsingham and the Anglican shrine. On the way we pass the **old station**, now St Seraphim, a Russian Orthodox chapel.

7. Little Walsingham

The focus of the Walsingham pilgrimage was the 'Holy House of Nazareth', a copy of the original built after the visions of Lady Richeldis de Faverches. In these visions, the Virgin Mary told her to build this house in Walsingham and dedicate it to the Annunciation. The date traditionally given for her visions is 1061, although this has been disputed and a slightly later date suggested. Lady Richeldis also had a chapel built and commissioned a wooden statue of the Virgin Mary.

A **Priory** was built nearby and it incorporated the shrine and chapel. Pilgrimage here soon rivalled Canterbury in popularity. This came to an end with the dissolution of the monasteries by King Henry VIII between 1536 and 1540: the Priory was dissolved in 1538 and the statue sent to London to be burned. There is a theory that the statue survived, and has been identified with the 'Langham Madonna' in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

The ruins of the Priory can be seen along with a plaque with the presumed site of the Holy House. The Catholic Shrine is now the Slipper Chapel.

In 1921, Alfred Hope Patten became Anglican Vicar of Little Walsingham. An Anglo-Catholic, he commissioned a statue of the Virgin Mary which was installed in **St Mary**, the parish church in Walsingham. This attracted growing numbers of pilgrims and, in 1931, the statue was translated to a new Holy House encased in a small pilgrimage church. In 1938 the church was enlarged to form the current **Anglican Shrine** of Our Lady of Walsingham. The church also has a **holy well**.

The Christian holy site was not the first religious establishment in the parish; a **Roman temple** is located here, part of a sizeable town stretching between Walsingham and the parish of Wighton to the north. Iron Age origins for the temple are indicated by a large numbers of coins.

The site of **Warham Iron Age Camp** 2.5 miles to the north is the best-preserved Iron Age monument in East Anglia and was the subject of a Centre for Archaeology and Heritage (SISJAC) research project in 2023. Walsingham was clearly a significant place in the Roman period; the temple seems to have been dedicated to Mercury, and several votive likenesses of the god are known from the site through metal-detecting. Another bronze figure found here is particularly intriguing, depicting a three-horned deity wearing a torc. Further images of satyrs, cupids, and an image of Bacchus, along with pottery vessels, suggest ritual activities including feasting.

Investigations by Thomas Browne (1605–1682) to the north in Great Walsingham are the earliest known excavation of a 5th to 6th century **cemetery** in England and form the inspiration for his great speculative meditation on mortality, *Hydriotaphia, Urn Burial* (1658). They were pre-Christian graves containing goods all of which were subsequently lost, but metal detecting has uncovered items that probably came from here. They include brooches, one from Lombardy, a Merovingian coin made into a pendant, and dress accessories. A cremation urn from this period has also been discovered from a separate location, perhaps indicating that there was more than one cemetery in Walsingham.

Within the Priory, the earliest grave found during excavations in 1961 appeared to date from between 650-800. This raises the possibility that there was an early Christian establishment here, but the evidence remains inconclusive.

We end day 4—and our pilgrimage walk—at the Anglican shrine.

NOTES