

The History of the Shrine of Our Lady of Caversham

1066

By 1066, there was a shrine chapel beside the River Thames, containing a statue of Our Blessed Lady to which pilgrims came to pray.

15th century

The fame of Our Lady of Caversham spread throughout the country and pilgrims came not only to pray, but also to present votive offerings to the Shrine so that, by the 15th century, the statue was plated in silver. In 1439 Isabella Beauchamp, Countess of Warwick, left 20lbs of gold to be made into a crown for the statue.

1538

14th September 1538, Dr. John London, the government agent, arrived at Caversham and, in a single day closed down the Shrine, stripped it bare of all its religious property and ended over five hundred years of religious devotion. The statue was sent up to Thomas Cromwell in London where it was burnt.

1920s

When a new bridge was built in the 1920s, stones from the foundations of the original bridge chapel were given to the parish to be incorporated into a restored shrine. At that time there was a fine white marble statue of Our Lady and Child given to the church to encourage devotion to Our Lady; it is now in the church, in the Cenacle.

1996

In 1996, to celebrate the centenary of the parish, a gold and silver crown was made for the statue. This was blessed by Pope John Paul II during a parish pilgrimage to Rome. The statue was solemnly crowned by the Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Barbarito, on 20th July 1996.

12th century

In 1106 Duke Robert of Normandy presented to the Shrine a relic of Christ's Passion which he had brought back from the First Crusade. In 1162 the care of the shrine was entrusted to the Augustinian Canons of Notley Abbey, near Aylesbury, one of whom was always resident at Caversham as the Warden of the Shrine.

1532

Kings and Queens of England travelled up river from Windsor to visit the Shrine, the last being Queen Catherine of Aragon who came on July 17th 1532 to pray to Our Blessed Lady while Henry VIII pressured her for a divorce.

1897

Revival of devotion to Our Lady of Caversham began again in 1897, the year following the foundation of the Parish of Our Lady and St. Anne. Fr. Haskew, the parish priest, wrote the first account of the Shrine in modern times,

1954

In the Marian Year of 1954 the then parish priest, Fr William O'Malley, decided that a suitable shrine should be built. A stone chapel, in the Norman style was built and a large oak statue of Our Lady and Child, about 500 years old, from Northern Europe, was purchased (reputedly found in an antique shop in London). This lovely statue shows Mary nursing the infant Christ;

2016

The Shrine project to restore the shrine, revive devotion to Mary and to bring pilgrims back to Caversham was launched by Fr Paul Martin.

