

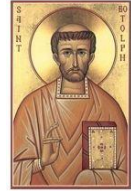


# The Botolphian

Newsletter of

The Society of Saint Botolph

[www.botolph.info](http://www.botolph.info)



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Issue Number 2.

1<sup>st</sup> May 2013.

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Copy for next newsletter: *23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013.*

## Editorial.

Well I must say that I have been overwhelmed by the support I have received for the society and the newsletter. Membership stood at 65 on 1<sup>st</sup> April and five days later was 101 including two from Australia.

Membership of SOSB is of course a very simple arrangement (money not being involved) and means that you will receive regular newsletters and will be warmly welcomed at SOSB events such as the annual luncheon.

People who have joined seem to fall into three categories: (i) those who have developed an interest and enthusiasm for Botolph (ii) those who have a general fascination for church architecture and enjoy visiting interesting churches (iii) those long-standing and dear friends of mine who have often supported me in the past and concede that Botolph is quite a 'fun subject.'

Many thanks to all of you. The great surge in numbers makes the project seem even more worthwhile.

So ... onwards we go together – solving more of Botolph's mysteries.

The theme of this issue is 'The Saint Botolph's Churches in London.' They are so close together and have such similar pedigrees that I have featured one but devote this issue to a comparison of all four.

## Bishopsgate or properly:-

### St. Botolph-without-Bishopsgate

**Approach: By Car:** from the London Wall car park (51.5171, -0.0899) walk east to the next major junction (Bishopsgate) and turn left.



Above: Saint Botolph-without-Bishopsgate is shown in red spanned on each side by Aldersgate and Aldgate in blue.

**By Underground:** When in Liverpool Street Station, leave the railway lines on your left (as shown in the diagram below) and head for the Bishopsgate exit. Turn right into Bishopsgate and the church is on your right.



**Key:** *The church is open every weekday from 8 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. Weekly Eucharists are held on Wednesdays (music & preaching) at 1.10 p.m. and Thursdays (words & silence) at 12.10 p.m.*



**Contact:** *Mhairi Ellis, Administrator. 02075 883 388. [church@botolph.org.uk](mailto:church@botolph.org.uk). The Rector is Revd Dr Alan McCormack.*

**Location:** *51.5166, -0.0814 (Just west of Greenwich so remember to insert the minus sign if using your GPS).*

**Listed Grade:** *II\*.*

#### **History of the existing church:**

The church was built in 1725. Its predecessor survived the Great Fire of London of 1666 but fell into disrepair and was demolished to make way for a replacement. During the work the foundations of an earlier Anglo-Saxon church were discovered.

#### **Foundation of the site:**

The Bishopsgate booklet says "Christian worship has probably been offered on this site since Roman days." No Roman foundations have yet been discovered but there is no doubt that Christian churches existed in Roman Londinium.

#### **Items of interest within the church:**

- 1. 18C Font in which John Keats (b.1795) was baptised.*
- 2. The fact that the 1725 architect James Gould placed the tower at the east end of the building in order to provide a striking street frontage. He used expensive stone here whereas the rest is made of red brick.*
- 3 The barrel vaulted nave with balconies.*

- 4. The large west window which was added later to create more light.*
- 5. The parish registers are complete from 1558. The burial of an infant son of the playwright Ben Jonson is recorded.*
- 6. In the vestry there is a wall plaque to the memory of a flamboyant man of his time, Sir Paul Pindar (died 1650 - James I's Ambassador to Turkey).*
- 7. Regimental Chapel of the Honourable Artillery Company & the Book of Remembrance of the London Rifle Brigade.*
- 8. A recent memorial to haemophiliacs who have died from contaminated blood products.*
- 9. The 1997 stained glass window commemorating the restitution of the church following extensive repairs necessitated by IRA bombs in 1992 and 1993. It was the Worshipful Company of Bowyers who commissioned the new window.*
- 10. Outside: the first City burial ground to be converted into a public garden.*
- 11. St. Botolph's Hall which was formerly the parish school and is now available for hire as a meeting or dining room.*
- 12. A tennis court - also for hire. How many other churches I wonder have such facilities?*
- 13. Tomb of Sir William Rawlins (founder of the Eagle Star Insurance Company).*
- 14. Memorial cross commemorating the Battle of Jutland and the death of Lord Kitchener.*

***My grateful thanks to Mhairi Ellis for her advice and corrections regarding this feature.***

#### **Relevance of the church to Botolph's life:**

Was Botolph instrumental in founding this church or was it built at the turn of the millennium in response to his fame as the Patron Saint of Travellers? See discussion below.

#### **Places of Interest in the vicinity:**

*St. Botolph's-without-Aldgate is only a few minutes' walk away. Cross Bishopsgate and as soon as you start walking down Houndsditch you will see the church beckoning you from the end of the road.*

*Alternatively if you feel like a change, walk to the west where you will find the London Museum (at the junction of London Wall and St Martin's Le-Grand), with St. Botolph's-without-Aldersgate close by.*

#### **Accessibility of the other churches.**

**Aldersgate** lies 1 mile west of Bishopsgate. It is a Guild church and famous for its 'Aldersgate Talks' which take place every Tuesday at 1 p.m;

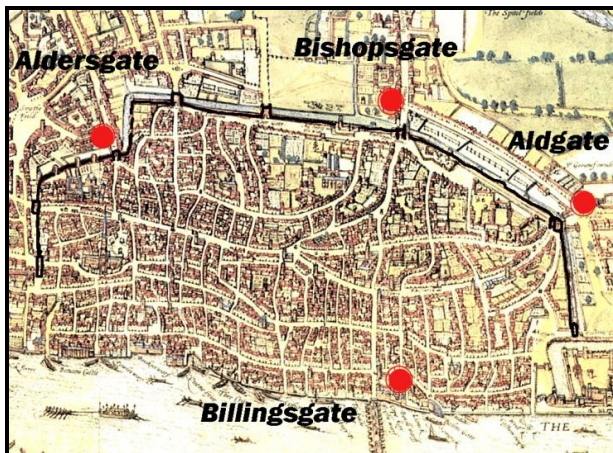


the church remains open until 4 p.m. On Sundays the Presbyterian Church uses the building for services at 11 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. The church remains locked at other times.

**Aldgate** is 0.3 miles SE of Bishopsgate. It is open on weekdays from 10 a.m. to 2 or 3 p.m. - or sometimes later. 'Said Eucharists' are held at 10.30 a.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays and 'Sung Eucharists' at 10.30 a.m. on Sundays.

**St. Botolph's Billingsgate** was a victim of the Great Fire of London in 1666 and the site is 1 mile south of Bishopsgate, buried beneath the Daily Express offices. There is not even a 'Blue Plaque' to show evidence of the sterling work that this little church did although 'Botolph Street' can be found nearby.

With the exception of Billingsgate, the other Saint Botolph churches are all '*without*.' That is to say that they are located *outside* the city walls as seen below.



### A little etymology ...

The names of Saint Botolph's-without-Aldersgate and Saint Botolph's-without-Aldgate sound rather similar but they stem from different sources. The derivation of the former is from 'Aldermens' Gate whereas the latter is from the Old English meaning 'Old' Gate.

On the same tack: 'Aldwych' in London means 'Old City' - '*wic*' being the term given to trading centres and perpetuated in today's Norwich, Ipswich etc. Indeed it was the *Aldwych* area in which Anglo-Saxons settled rather than use the old walled city - see below.

Even from a brief glimpse of their positions it is clear that the Botolph churches are not positioned randomly since all four lie at the main city gates. This might suggest that there is a mystery here which begs to be unravelled.

## Focus on Botolph Part II.

**This month's subject: What part, if any, did Botolph play in the foundation of the four London churches?**

The walls and gates of London were built (rather later than one might perhaps think) by Roman legions towards the end of the third century. When Botolph arrived back in Britain in 647 after spending nine years in France, the old walled Roman city was derelict and had been so for nearly 200 years and yet travellers still passed through it in order to use the only bridge across that part of the Thames.

In 604, King Æthelberht of Kent had made a bid to regenerate the area by founding the first church on the site upon which St. Paul's cathedral now stands; he installed Abbot Mellitus as (it is said) the first Bishop of London (although this ignores the C4 Roman bishop Restitutus). Æthelberht's efforts must have been more in hope than expectation since within twelve years Mellitus was hounded out of his see by East Saxon infidels.

Botolph would surely have been intrigued and saddened by the sight of the ruins as he passed through on his journey from Kent to East Anglia. He would have empathised with fellow travellers and perhaps identified a need for shelter and spiritual encouragement as people entered and left the place on their potentially dangerous journeys.

There is evidence (but as yet I have found no citation for this) that, at some stage, Botolph undertook a 'London Mission.' Could it have been that this first experience on coming 'home' inspired him to return a short time later and organise the building of wooden field chapels at each of the ruined Roman gates?

If Botolph did indeed complete this project within his lifetime when London was just a shell, then this would explain why his churches were *outside* the city walls and the reason for there being *several* of them rather than just one central one.

Is it coincidence that it was in 654 that Cedd took up office as the second (non-Roman) bishop of London? Was it Bishop Cedd's arrival that liberated Botolph and allowed him to concentrate his efforts on building his famous monastery of Icanho in that very same year?

If, on the other hand, the churches were founded 300 years *later* - when the city was at last repopulated - then it is not clear why *four* churches should have been built when just *one* church or abbey (perhaps close to the bridge at Billingsgate) would have satisfied the need?

In these circumstances the churches would have been commissioned by someone other than our saint but the fact that they were dedicated to Saint Botolph does not cause any surprise because by that time he was well-established as the Patron Saint of Travellers so it would have been unthinkable to dedicate such churches to anyone but he.

As I write this I am aware that a fifteenth-century chapel within the foundations of Saint Botolph's church was excavated at Billingsgate (Site Code BIG32) in 1982 by the Museum of London Department of Urban Archaeology. I am aware of the results of the investigation of the 50 or so medieval burials that were discovered but so far I have been unable to discover the nature and date of the building's *foundations*. Perhaps one of our readers knows the answer to this and will be kind enough to enlighten us.

This is a controversial topic and I look forward to receiving *your* views on the subject.

### **Readers' Letters and Emails**

1. I was delighted to hear from the well-known historian and 'Wuffing Dynasty' specialist, Dr. Sam Newton regarding the origin of Botolph's name.

He believes that the first part of the name does not derive from 'Beorht' (meaning 'bright') but from 'bót' (meaning 'deliverance/help' etc). Thus, Dr Newton suggests, Botolph's name, rather than meaning 'Bright-wolf,'<sup>1</sup> is better translated as 'Help-Wolf.'

2. I was very sad to hear that another well-known historian, the nonagenarian Norman Scarfe, is in failing health and will not therefore be able to add lively discussion to our topics as I had hoped. We wish him well for the future.

3. Peter van Demark contacted me to tell me that he is a member of the St Botolph's Club in Boston MA, and is organising a Club Dinner on 17 June 2013 in celebration of St Botolph's Day. The Club plans to produce a play about the derivation of its name and to have a visitation from St Botolph, (an actor who will continue as host during the dinner).

4. I have written to all 17 Scandinavian 'Budolfi' churches but so far there has been

nothing but an almighty silence. I live in hope! If anyone has a contact within this area please let me know.

### **Membership**

I am pleased to say that our membership has doubled within the past month and now stands at 123. We need more. If you enjoy the publication then please tell your friends.

### **Social Events: First Call for numbers.**

I have received no objections to the date of **Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2013** for the society's luncheon so please mark that in your diaries and let me know if you feel that you are likely to attend.

At the moment numbers stand at 2 - namely our president Father Timothy L'Estrange and myself!

No doubt we shall encourage our families to come and this will swell numbers but it would be even better if you would send me an email as soon as possible to indicate your interest. This will encourage me enormously. I will not be asking for a *firm* commitment until a month before the date but a tentative 'yes' would be nice now even if you have to withdraw later.

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The venue is at present unknown but the **Holiday Inn at Ipswich is a possibility**. They are prepared to provide a two-course lunch for £15 per head. We are hoping to have a speaker on a 'Botolph' subject and this is another reason that I really need to hear from you since just FT and I will not make an inspiring audience for a good speaker.

If you hate Ipswich and would rather that the venue were in Cambridge as first mooted, then let me know and I will make further enquiries.

#### **Regular Endnotes**

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Folkestone, Kent. 1st May 2013.