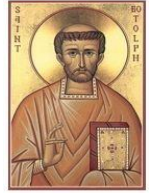




# The Botolphian

Newsletter of  
The Society of Saint Botolph

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



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President: Revd Timothy L'Estrange, Vicar of St.Gabriel's Church, North Acton.

Issue Number: 7

1st October 2013

## Highlights this month

- St. Botolph's Cambridge.
- The mystery of six missing years.
- Email from Patricia Croxton-Smith.
- The 9th October Annual Luncheon

## Editorial

Zina and I are greatly looking forward to the first Annual Luncheon next week, to hearing Graham Jones's talk, and to meeting and re-meeting those who attend.

Our president, Father Timothy L'Estrange, will be presiding over the luncheon and, although he and I have communicated with each other quite a lot by email etc., I must confess that we have never actually met and I very much look forward to this. I have been in touch with Revd. Professor William Horbury who is the Rector of St. Botolph's Cambridge. Sadly he will not be able to join us at our luncheon but he invites us all to the 10.30 a.m. Holy Communion Service at the church. Zina and I hope to attend.

When deciding upon which church to feature this month it seemed logical to choose the Cambridge church. I had to apply 'distance-learning' to this since I have never visited it previously. It proved an interesting subject however and I look forward to seeing it 'in the stone' as it were.

**STOP PRESS:** *The University Arms Hotel Cambridge was severely damaged by fire this morning (1st October) but at the moment it looks as if our luncheon can still go ahead. I will be in touch directly with all those concerned.*

## Church Feature

# Cambridge.

**Approach:** *Saint Botolph's Church Cambridge lies at the junction of Silver Street and*

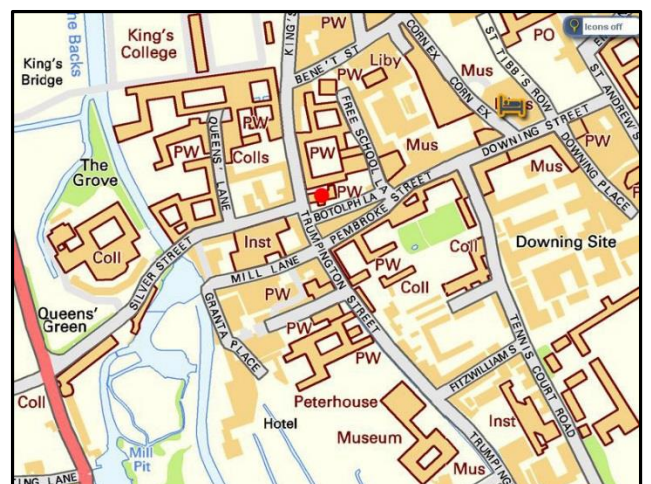
*Trumpington Street. N.B. Silver Street is often closed to motor traffic. The nearest parking (metered) is in Sidgwick Avenue, West Road and Queens Road. Parking is free on Sundays.*

**Key:** *The church is open every day. Holy Communion is held on Wednesdays at 10.30 a.m. and Sunday Services are at 8 a.m., 11 a.m. and 6.30 p.m.*

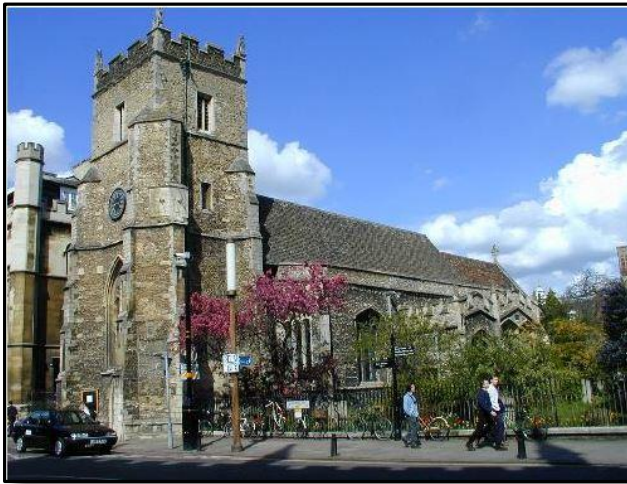
**Location:** 52.2024, 0.1181, CB2.

**Listed Grade:** I

Particularly for the benefit of our American cousins I include this map showing the location of Cambridge ...



... and the red dot in the map above shows the location of the church within the city.



The above photograph is copyright and included courtesy of [cambridge2000.com](http://cambridge2000.com).

### Foundation of the site:

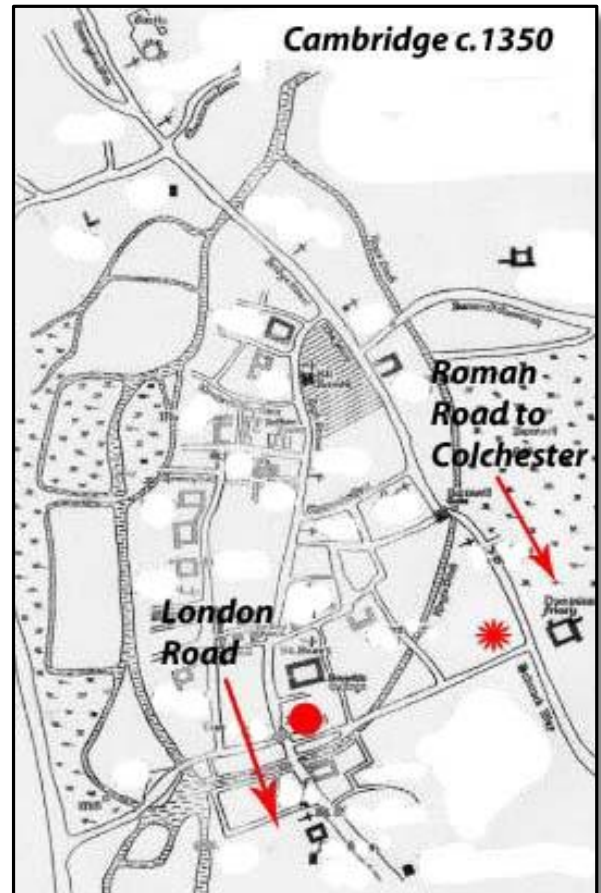
One of the first records of the ancient parish of St. Botolph's Cambridge dates from late in C12 when the Norman church was appropriated by Bishop Eustace of Ely. Sadly no part of the Norman church remains today; the present structure dates from c.1350.

The church's website tells us that a Saxon church preceded the Norman one but I can find no evidence for this.

As I have discovered to my cost (see Readers' Letters in this issue), most St. Botolph's churches are to be found on or close to ancient roads or trackways. The Roman road from Colchester passed through Cambridge along the line of the present city's Regent Street. One might have expected therefore that a C7 Botolph foundation would have been built at the gate which served *this* thoroughfare (i.e. positioned where starred red in the map below). Instead, we find the church further to the west (shown as a red circle) at the old South Gate which served the road to London. This would suggest that, if a Saxon predecessor had indeed existed on the present site it is likely to have been built *late* in the Saxon period when the road to London had become more important than the road to Colchester. We must sadly conclude that, if Saxon church there was, it was too late to be one which was founded directly by our saint.

Indeed Cambridge's fortunes have waxed and waned. In Roman times it seems to have been relatively insignificant and was known as 'Duroliponte'. In C6 it thrived under the Anglo-Saxons and became known as 'Grantbrycge' - (The

Bridge over the river Granta). After the name of the town became corrupted to 'Cambridge' the river's name was suitably changed to the 'Cam' - although the river is still called the 'Granta' in its lower reaches.



Bede described the place during Botolph's time as being a 'little ruined city' but two centuries later, under Viking rule, the community began to prosper again. The later Saxons capitalised on this and founded churches one of which might well have been dedicated to Saint Botolph.

In C4 the Romans had installed city walls containing four gates. In C13 Henry III had followed suit and spent Lent in the city while he reorganised the place's defences and oversaw the re-modelling of the 'King's Ditch' and the building of the wooden Barnwell and Trumpington gates and a gated bridge over the River Cam. The Norman St. Botolph's church would have featured prominently in this scheme as it was at the intersection of these last two items. Once again Saint Botolph's fame as the patron saint of travellers was put to good use.

The church we see today consists of a C14 nave with a C15 tower, south chapel and rood screen.

We have already (in the July issue of *The Botolphian*) met Revd. Dr. W.M. Campion, rector of St. Botolph's from 1862 to 1892. It was he, you may remember, who bought a plot of land at Great Eversden while investing in the Copralite industry. This same rector was responsible for many improvements and alterations, much of which involved the designer and painter George Fredrick Bodley (1827-1907) who specialised in restoring and redecorating medieval churches. The resulting Chancel and Sanctuary are therefore comparatively modern (C18-19).

The importance of Bodley's work, together with that of other C19 artists, is only just beginning to be recognised having until recently been overshadowed by a greater interest in *medieval* painting.

A century after Bodley died, his work was suffering severely from the ravages of soot, dirt and moisture and in 2004 a 4-year restoration project was started by *Tobit Curteis Associates* and *Sally Woodcock Paintings Conservation* in order to remedy this. The chancel of the church is now a major showpiece for Bodley's work.



The church has four bells which were cast in 1460 which was when the west tower was added to the main building. It was around this same time that Queens' College bought the living from Corpus Christi College. Indeed it was a C15 rector of the

church, Andrew Docket, who provided the initiative for founding Queens' in the first place!

**Items of interest within the church:**

1. *The beautifully-restored 'Bodley-painted' chancel ceiling.*
2. *The C15 rood screen with its C19 paintings.*
3. *The C19 Bodley tomb paintings.*
4. *The Campion memorial window in the north wall of the chancel depicting St. Botolph between St. Bernard and St. Margaret, the two patron saints of Queens' College.*
5. *Charles Darwin's family worshipped here and there is a memorial to him by the vestry door.*

**... and outside:**

6. *The C15 tower with its enormous buttresses and the stone figures at each corner representing the evangelists.*
7. *The sundial on the south-west buttress.*

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

As argued above, it seems unlikely that Botolph had a hand in founding a church here. It is quite possible that today's church had a late Saxon predecessor which would have been built at a time when the cult of St. Botolph was in the ascendant.

**Places of Interest in the vicinity:**

We are in Cambridge and it is more a matter of deciding what *not* to include in the itinerary so in these circumstances I will leave this section blank.

**Focus on Saint Botolph.**

**The mystery of six missing years.**

Last month we focussed on Oblates and Novitiates and considered the way that Botolph might have entered the church. It is likely that he did so at around the age of twelve. We know nothing of his progress 'through the cloisters' before he went abroad which he probably did at about eighteen. This leaves the years 632 to 638 (approximately) for us to speculate upon. What was he doing then? Where was he?

It has been suggested that he went for his training to **Bosham** on the south coast but that is unlikely because the monastery there was not founded until forty years later. Staying in the south, **Canterbury** would of course seem an obvious choice since the monastery had been functional before the turn of the century; **Rochester's** priory was set up soon afterwards in A.D.604. The only other monasteries in the south-east were those in Lyminge (635) and Dover (c.638), - but both were

a little too late to have provided Botolph's early education.

The fact is that, looking at the situation from the Christianity perspective, it was *very early days*. In Francia monasteries abounded, - as they would in Britain from 20 or 30 years later, but for now there was a paucity of them.

**York**, which had had a small core of Christian citizens since C4, threw up a small wooden church in 627 and over the next ten years made the effort to turn it into a Christian centre. Perhaps Botolph was involved in this project? A new stone structure was built but this only survived for a short while.

Columba founded the **Iona** monastery in 563 and we know that in c.635 Aidan came south from this community and created the centre at **Lindisfarne** which is credited with converting the Northumbrians to Christianity. We have already suggested that Botolph might have had his roots in the north so maybe his inspiration came from this source.

**Ireland** too has a great tradition of Christian saints of whom the most notable earliest one was perhaps St. Brendan (c.484-577). Botolph's name has indeed been speculatively linked with the Emerald Isle but without any firm evidence.

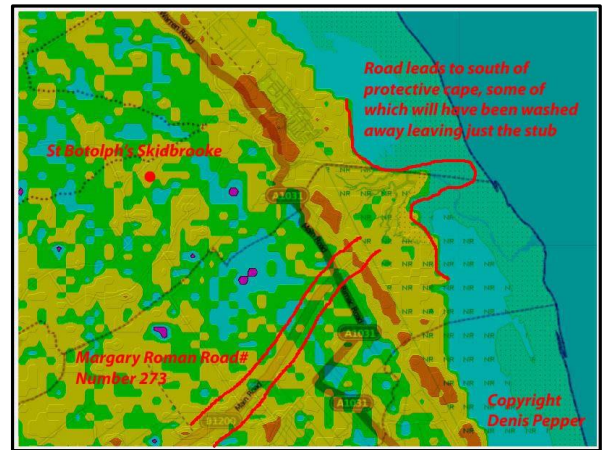
He was undoubtedly *somewhere* during those six important years and he and we owe a debt of gratitude to whoever it was that took him under their wing and inspired him to become the great Abbot that he was.

### Readers' Letters and Emails

**Patricia Croxton-Smith** from Hadstock emailed me to re-iterate the point that she had made to me before, that virtually every Saint Botolph's church lies on an important ancient road or trackway. She told me that my comment about the Skidbrooke church being devoid of such a feature was erroneous and if I looked more closely I would find the missing road.

Patricia is a constant inspiration and she was quite right of course, - I should have looked at my list of Margary Roman roads. On belatedly so doing I discovered Number 273 which leads from the banks of the River Witham just above Boston, - via Manby to Skidbrooke where it ends at a point where the SRTM contour map (see below) shows evidence of the possibility of a former headland which would have offered protection for ships unloading their wares at the port of *Schitebroc*.

Thank you Patricia. This, once again, shows the value of this forum and I hope that others will follow her example by sending in their comments, observations and even criticisms.



### Membership

I am delighted to welcome to the society Penelope Coggill from St. Botolph's Cambridge and David and Janet Buxton from St. Botolph's at Church with Chapel Brampton. I look forward to meeting all three at the Annual Luncheon in Cambridge on 9th October. I am also pleased to welcome my friend Jean Stone.

Membership now stands at 206 but, from the comments I receive from new members it is clear that there are many others out there who would like to join and receive the newsletters but the existence of the society is being kept *a closely guarded secret*. Please help by forwarding these newsletters to your friends and encourage them to register on the website: [www.botolph.info](http://www.botolph.info).

### The Society's first Annual Luncheon

is nearly upon us and will be held on

Wednesday 9th October 2013 at 12.30 for 1pm

at the University Arms Hotel, in Regent Street, Cambridge, CB2 1AD. The cost is £19 per person which includes a two course lunch with tea and coffee.

Within the next few days I shall be contacting directly all those who have signed up for this. I will include details regarding parking etc.

*I have handed the numbers into the hotel now but if you have only just heard about this event and would dearly like to join us please telephone me on 01303 221-777 and I will endeavour to squeeze you in.*

Dr Graham Jones will be entertaining us after lunch with a talk entitled:-

***'The saint at the gate and the king on the shore: Botolph and his cult over time and space.'***

**Regular Endnotes**

If this is your first 'Botolphian' and you have acquired it by circuitous means but would like to receive an email copy each month then just send an email to [botolph@virginmedia.com](mailto:botolph@virginmedia.com) saying 'YES PLEASE.'  
If you wish to UNsubscribe then send the message 'NO THANKS.'

You will frequently see the 'twin' towns of ***Boston*** mentioned in these newsletters, - one in Lincolnshire and the other in Massachusetts USA. The relevance to the Society is that the name 'Boston' is reputed to be a contraction of '***Botolph's Town.***'

**Disclaimer**

Strenuous attempts have been made to verify the accuracy of the contents of these newsletters but it is up to each individual to check such matters as 'Free Parking' and neither the Editor nor the Society will take responsibility for errors leading to prosecution or fines.

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Folkestone, Kent. 1st May 2013.