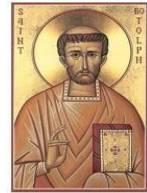




# The Botolphian

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: 24

1st April 2015

## Highlights this month

- St Botolph's Church, Knottingley, Yorks.
- I am delighted to welcome the following new members: Revd Lorna Brabin-Smith and Beryl Preston (Vicar and Churchwarden from Ratcliffe-on-the-Wreake); Sigrid Duly (Sandgate, Kent); Andrew Young, Stuart and Amanda Bell, Linda Humphreys and Barbara Smith (all from Slapton, Northants); Joan and Roger Moreton (Sibson, Leics.); Revd Dr Ed Bampton (Shepshed, Leics.). This brings our total email numbers to 265 which represents a membership of over 400.
- Emails from Father Pachomius, Graham Jones, John Sennett.
- **Please Note:** This year's Annual Luncheon will be held at the Cambridge City Hotel at **12.30 for 1 p.m.** on **TUESDAY 13 OCTOBER 2015.**

## Editorial

I decided this month that it was time for the Church Feature to move away from the Home Counties and up to Yorkshire. It was nearly three years ago (I can hardly believe it is that long) when Zina and I visited Knottingley, and I remember the Vicar, Clive Flatters telling me that his previous church was also a Botolph Church - namely Ratcliffe-on-the-Wreake.

Zina and I had the pleasure of visiting Ratcliffe on the Wreake the day before yesterday and are grateful to the Churchwarden, Beryl Preston, for showing us round her well-kept and valued church. We also visited six other lovely St Botolph churches over three days and were given warm welcomes by lots of wonderful people. More about that in the next issue!

## Church Feature

### **K**nottingley (Yorks).

**Approach:** The town (pop: 13,503) is served by the A645 which travels East-West. Whichever is your direction of approach, soon after crossing the river, there is a right-angled bend. Turn north here into Chapel Street and park outside the church.

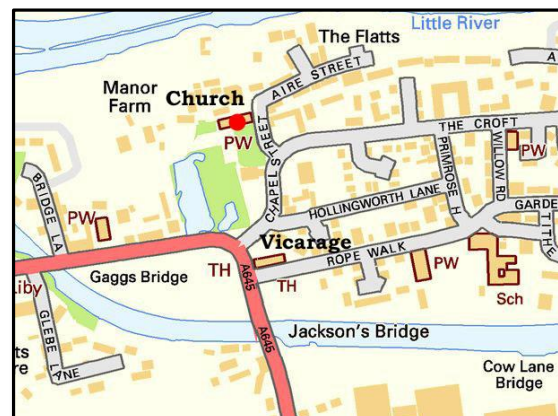
**Key:** For security reasons the church is kept locked so telephone the Vicar previously. (He lives almost opposite the church).

**Vicar:** Revd Clive Flatters, St Botolph's Vicarage, Chapel Street, Knottingley WF11 9AN. Tel: 01977 672-267.

**Church services:** Sundays 10 a.m.; Wednesdays 9.15 a.m.

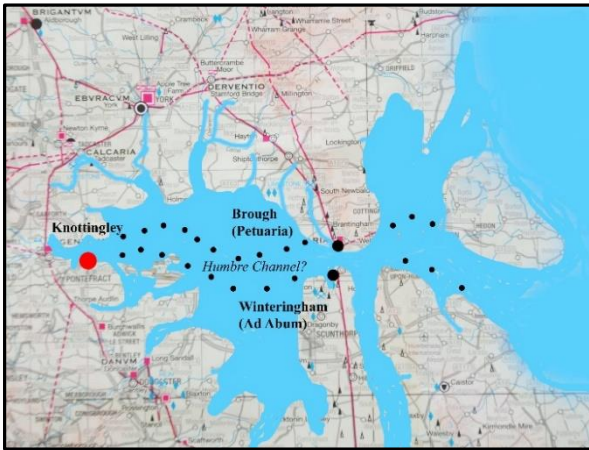
**Location:** Chapel Street, Knottingley WF11 9AF; Lat/Long: 51.7109. -1.2443; NGR: SE4997824100..

**Listed Grade: II**





As you will see from the map above, Knottingley is in West Yorkshire and, longitudinally speaking, is well towards the middle of the country. This belies the fact that it was, for many years, an important port. Below is a conjectural view of how the area might have looked in Botolph's time in C7.



St Botolph's Knottingley does not look that old however - particularly once you are inside and view the nave. This first impression is justified because most of the building dates from c.1750 when the former Norman nave was reconstructed. The west tower was added in 1873 and the chancel was rebuilt in 1886.

The 'Humber' river flows inland past Hull on its north bank (in C7 Hull was less significant than Brough) and sailing vessels would have found themselves in a vast area of marshy water where the deep water channels would probably have been marked by 'withies' (poles cut roughly from trees and plunged into the mud at the channel edges). Roman roads, (the red lines) encircle the lagoon. There would have been occasional dry islands such as the one which would eventually become the site of Selby.



The location of today's church would place it right on the edge of the river bank as seen in the contour map below. The river you crossed just before your arrival at the church was a tributary of the River Aire and its main channel runs north of the church. Further downstream the Aire becomes the Ouse which in turn becomes the great River Humber.

Many high-quality features are to be found in the church, such as the font, the pulpit and numerous wall monuments. One such is a memorial which includes a carved bird in the pediment and (fascinatingly) incised skull-and-crossbones in each corner; it honours William Savile (d.1691) I have been unable to discover much information about Savile other than that his father seems to



have been a lively MP who was loyal to the subsequently-beheaded Charles I; he was imprisoned for two weeks in the Tower of London and later swam the River Aire to escape Fairfax's army. If I have the right man, William's mother Anne was a heroine of the civil war when, whilst heavily pregnant, she was instrumental in defending Sheffield Castle.

The fabric of Knottingley church is of Magnesian (Dolomitic) limestone which is rendered in both chancel and nave. The roofs are made of stone slate. A ring of ten bells was installed in the tower in mid C20.



The above view of the chancel is graced by the presence of the incumbent, Revd Clive Slatters who kindly showed us round.

**History of the site:**

The church lies in a classic position: close to a Roman road and on the banks of an historically-important waterway. The nearby 3000 BC Ferrybridge Henge lends further evidence to the fact that the local settlement has an ancient origin.

The site is on the edge of the Pennines which created a natural barrier to westward Anglo-Saxon expansion. It was the passes through the hills (mostly aligned with rivers such as the Humber) which afforded a natural channel for cultural drift.

Interestingly it is the fact that the church is dedicated to St Botolph which has led writers to suspect a much earlier foundation than the Norman provenance for which there is ample evidence. The church was not mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 but is cited in a document dated between 1119 and 1121 which confirms a grant by Robert de Lacy of the chapel of Knottingley to a priory at Pontefract.

**Relevance to Botolph's life.**

At first glance the church looks too recent for its foundation to have any direct relevance to Botolph but the more one looks at its position, the more one begins to wonder if our Saint or one or more of his apostles, travelled that way on a missionary venture.

We have another five Botolph Churches to visit between Knottingley and the one that is the furthest north (at Frosterley in Durham) and it is tempting to imagine that some of these might have been founded as a result of a positive drive by our missionary-minded saint to spread the word of God as far afield as possible. The problem is a lack of evidence and it is all too easy to take each church, assume Saxon foundations and provide plausible speculations that the foundation of many of the churches were directly motivated by Saint Botolph's group during his lifetime.

In order to support such speculation the first thing we need is archaeological evidence of the church being founded on the site of a former Saxon building. This could be provided by digs at the church sites but archaeologists are routinely involved in emergency rescue missions and rarely, it seems, have time for planned excavations. One church that lends itself to this type of investigation is St Botolph's Skidbrooke (see *The Botolphian* September 2013) where the floor has already been ripped up and seems to be crying out for the experts to move in.

I wonder if any readers have suggestions about how one might persuade an archaeological group to dig at Skidbrooke?

**Classification of the Knottingley site:**

This site could date from C7 and therefore attract an 'A' classification. Without firm evidence of

Saxon foundations however, and bearing in mind the proximity of an ancient trackway and Knottingley's reputation as a port, the classification could just as easily be B(iii) [i.e. a 'Travellers' Church' founded after the Norman Conquest].

### An Anomaly.

For many years there lived at Knottingley a man known as Professor Kenneth Keenan, L.I.B., Ph.D., FCIB whose status and qualifications were eventually called into question.

Whatever his true background there is no doubt that he worked hard on the Botolph story and did some very productive research which he wrote up in an excellent little booklet entitled *St Botolph, His Life and Times* which was available at Knottingley church. Sadly I have never seen this booklet but most of its contents are to be found at:

[www.st-botolphs.com/botolph/st\\_botolph\\_life.htm](http://www.st-botolphs.com/botolph/st_botolph_life.htm).

I understand that eventually there was some hue and cry and Professor Keenan disappeared from the scene - which is a shame because I would have liked to have met him. He adds yet another conundrum to the Botolph mystery.

### Readers' letters and emails.

**1. Father Pachomius** (from the Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Brookline, USA) wrote to say how intrigued he was by the picture of the ossuary at St Leonard's Church, Hythe. He asked for more information which I am hoping to be able to send to him shortly.

**2. Graham Jones** wrote a very helpful email on the subject of the 'mixed dedications' at Croxton Kerrial. Tony Connolly is investigating this and Graham is able to confirm:

*"Botolph was the patron there at least as late as 1518 and then John the Baptist had intervened by 1754. Botolph was named as patron in two wills I have seen, probably the same two wills mentioned without citation in a separate study of pre-Reformation Leicestershire dedications by Philip Lloyd (1973)."*

Thank you Graham. Sadly I seem to have lost contact with Tony Connolly in the last month since his email bounced back when I sent the March *Botolphian*. If anyone can help by contacting Tony I would be grateful.

**3. John Sennett** wrote to say that *The Botolphian Newsletter* ...

*"is popped up in our little Church porch beside the Ridgeway on the chalk escarpment of the*

*Chilterns ... and receives many admiring reactions from all the pilgrims and others on their journeyings ... particularly ..during our 18th year of our Snowdrop Teas events when re raised £5,000 [Ed: Wow! Congratulations!] for Church funds."*

John kindly attached a photograph (see below) showing the Blessing of the Snowdrops this year at Swyncombe (South Oxfordshire).



### Endnotes

Please do not hesitate to write to me or send an email to [botolph@virginmedia.com](mailto:botolph@virginmedia.com) if you have any alternative views to those expressed in *The Botolphian*. It is good to engender some controversy from time to time!

St Botolph's Day (17th June) is fast approaching. I would be pleased to hear of individual churches' plans to celebrate it.

### 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 said to be a contraction of '**Botolph's Town**.'

### Classification of Botolph Church sites:-

- A: C7 church sites relevant to Botolph's life.
- B: 'Travellers' churches.

Bearing in mind that the Danish invasions started in c.800 and continued for 200 years, it seems logical to sub-divide Type B (and perhaps type C) churches into those which appear to have been founded:-

- (i) before 800
- (ii) between 800 and 1066 and
- (iii) after the Norman Conquest.

- C: Neither of the above.

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