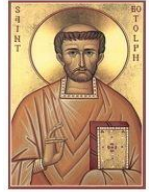




# The Botolphian

Newsletter of  
The Society of Saint Botolph

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



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Admin: Denis Pepper, 17, Cliffe House, Radnor Cliff, Folkestone, Kent, CT20 2TY. Tel: +44 (0)1303 221-777 [botolph@virginmedia.com](mailto:botolph@virginmedia.com)  
President: Revd Timothy L'Estrange, Vicar of St.Gabriel's Church, North Acton.

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1<sup>st</sup> May 2016

## Highlights this month

- St Botolph's church, Shingham, Norfolk.
- Welcome to new members: Rosemary and Clive Talbot from Headcorn, Kent; Paul Bingham from Folkestone; Jenny Croft from Folkestone; Philip Spencer from Beachamwell; David Mason from Beachamwell. Email addresses now stand at 293 and membership at about 370.
- Emails from Marion Peel, Guy Hartfall, Father Pachomius, Jean Stone, Hilary Tolputt, Penny Coggill, Anne Pegg, Chris Conn and Anne Dickinson.
- **Please note in your diaries that the Third Annual Luncheon of the Society will be held in Cambridge on Wednesday 12 October 2016.**

## Editorial

The March issue was, of course, late so you might think that this month's early arrival is by way of compensation. The truth is that we are off to Greece on Saturday and there will be a flurry of activity and confusion while we re-acclimatise ourselves to the Greek way of life. Until we settle in I can never be sure about the efficacy of emails and the internet there so this is my reason for sending your emails sooner rather than risking failure later.

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I did not expect *any* but I was pleased to see *several* members of the society at my talk in Folkestone a couple of weeks ago. I must say that it was very encouraging to speak to such a packed lecture room. The reason I was invited to give the talk was that our local research group is about to

seek funding for a project entitled 'Finding Eanswythe.' Saint Eanswythe (c.620-640) is the patron saint of Folkestone and it was she (the daughter of King Eadbald of Kent) who founded here the first nunnery in Britain. She is, as you will have noted, a contemporary of Saint Botolph (c.620-680). I was therefore asked to 'prepare the ground' by telling the story of Saint Botolph and his likely involvement in Folkestone whilst carefully steering clear of too much mention of St Eanswythe which the group will be dealing with later.

When I first became involved in 'things Botolphian,' I came across 'Lists of Botolph Churches' which had been written by several eminent researchers but I found no mention of Folkestone in any of them. This is because the last time we saw the foundations of our Botolph's Chapel was in 1876 just before a terrace of houses were built over them. Nevertheless, when, in C16 he visited Folkestone, John Leland had recorded '*Toward a quarter of a myle owt of the towne is a chapel of St Botulfe ...*' so we have no doubts about this part of our heritage ... *and* we know where the foundations are – even if we cannot see them.

It occurs to me that Folkestone cannot be alone in this. There must be records of other Botolph Churches that remain hidden in the archives and we can but hope that these will gradually come to the surface and be recognised.

I hoped that I had found another one when talking recently to a previous vicar of Wingham near Canterbury. She told me that the nearby Elmstone Church is a *church without a dedication* which immediately made me wonder ... ? On further investigation however, although it had some of the right credentials for a Botolph Church

i.e. it was close to a Roman road and on the lower edge of an escarpment, it seemed undoubtedly C12 without any sign of a Saxon predecessor so my hopes (in the absence of any further information) were dashed.

By contrast, the famous Escomb Church, Durham was once also a church without a dedication (although this deficiency was corrected in modern times) and it *does* have all the right credentials - so it bears further investigation.

### Church Feature

In the February 2016 issue we featured Tottenhill in Norfolk which is quite close to this month's church. I described the Tottenhill church as lying *'on higher ground at the eastern edge of what would, in Saxon times, have been a shallow water/marsh which we might call the 'Ouse Basin' since it is even now the catchment for water which drains into the River Ouse and thence out to sea.'* In fact, as Daniel Defoe said, this region is 'the sink for no less than 13 counties.'

Shingham is a resident of this basin too but before we discuss the location of the church we must note that its circumstances are different to those of Tottenhill because it lies on the 'wrong side' of a shingle causeway which carried a Roman road from Peterborough to Downham Market. In C7 therefore the settlement would not have been directly accessible from the sea. The western end of the causeway dates to the Bronze Age. 60,000 timbers were arranged in five rows and stretched out as far as Whittlesey. Part of the structure can still be seen at Flag Fen which is part of the Greater Fens Museum Partnership. The causeway must have been extended sometime later in order for the Roman road to have continued as far as Downham Market and beyond.



One would really expect there to have been a bridge or ford at some point to allow vessels

access to the Isle of Ely but this seems not to have been the case. In fact there is little evidence of Roman occupation at Ely other than a Roman road which approached from the south.

Whereas seagoing ships would have been able to moor quite close to the Botolph Churches at Grimston and Tottenhill, Shingham would only have been accessible by road or by craft sailing within the southerly lagoon.



## Shingham, Norfolk.

**Approach:** *The 'historical way' to approach Shingham would be to follow the A10 through Ely to Downham Market and then turn off on the Swaffham Road (A1122 - the Roman road mentioned later) and follow this, crossing the A134 at Stradsett and passing through Fincham. 2 miles after Fincham you will (if it is still there) see a sign welcoming you to The Brecks and see the Beachamwell signpost. Turn right here into White Road and continue until after nearly two miles you reach a five-way crossing. Bear slightly right here towards Shingham. After just less than a mile you will see the church, set back from the road, on your right.*





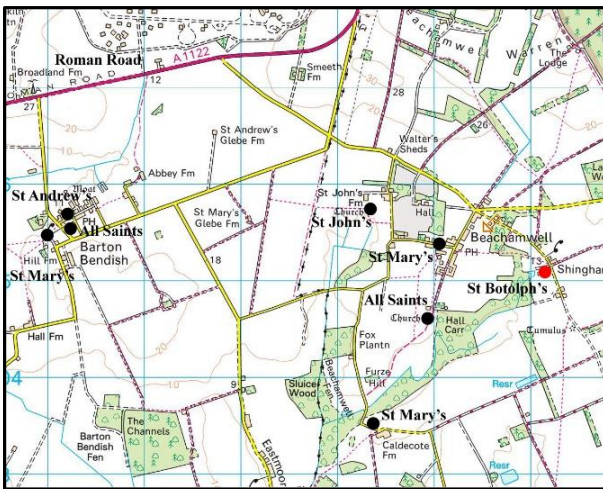
**Key:** The building is now owned by a local farmer and so is kept locked and only opened on special occasions. The last such occasion (at the time of writing) was on 13 Sep 2015. No further open days are planned.

**Location:** Swaffham PE37 8AY, 52.615368, 0.601562

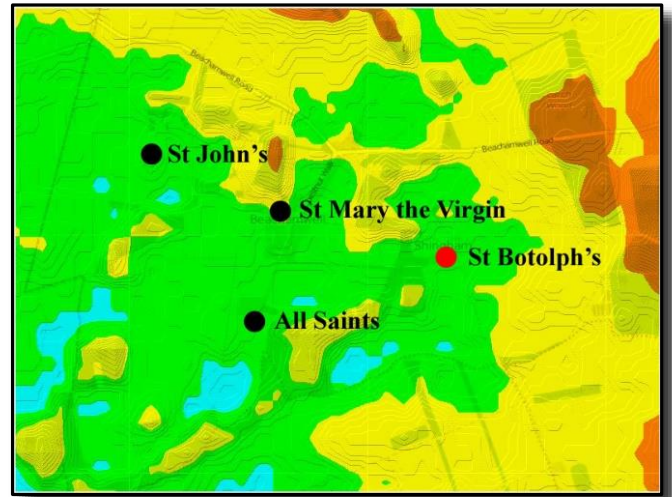
**Listed Grade:** I



St Botolph's Church Shingham has been redundant since about 1800 and lies at the back of a field just outside Beachamwell. This is a situation where it seems sensible to look at the other churches in the vicinity before addressing the subject itself.



They must have been very pious here at one time because eight churches are to be found within a one and a half mile radius which encompasses the village of Barton Bendish as well as Beachamwell. Four of the churches date from C14, two from C12, and two from C11 or earlier. Of these four are in ruins, two are redundant and two, namely St Andrews, Barton Bendish and St Mary's Beachamwell are up and running. The latter is a very pretty round tower church.



The reason for taking a glimpse at the other churches is to get an idea of the development of the community. The number of C14 churches suggest that this period marks the time when the community was thriving.

Looking backwards, St Mary the Virgin at Beachamwell (only half a mile from St Botolph's) is thought to date from C11 or earlier - maybe even as early as the year 900. St Botolph's, on the other hand, is Norman (i.e. C12 or C11) but is thought to be built on the foundations of a Saxon church – which of course may either be late Saxon like St Mary's or even earlier.

### The church

Knowing that it is a redundant church prepares the visitor to expect something that differs from the norm.



Shingham Church lies at the far end of a grassy field partly occupied by the overflow cemetery of St Mary's Beachamwell.





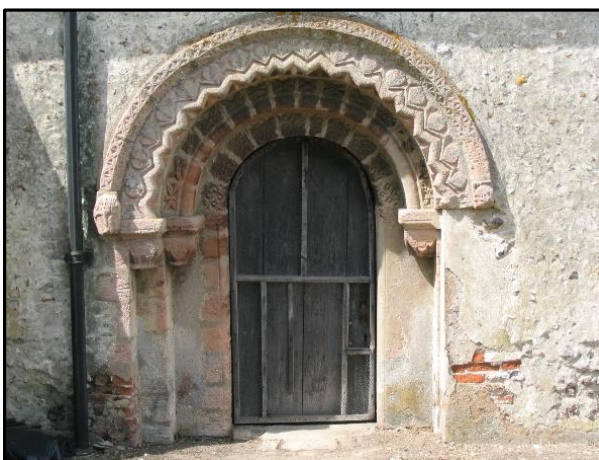
As one approaches, the first thing to greet you is the C14 decorated-style east window but, like many other windows in the church, this is a replacement because the basic building is much older.



The south wall is certainly not the most beautiful that I have seen. The windows give the appearance as having been purchased as a 'job lot' and fitted on a utilitarian basis - and the knapped-flints poke through the flaking ashlar rendering as if they are seeking liberty - but this is a factor of the age and location of the building which seems to have struggled heroically on against all the odds. Its sturdy structure continues to plod on today apparently oblivious of the fact that two-thirds of its neighbouring churches have long since met their demise.



Walking down the south side of the church a hotch-potch of windows presents itself. First a flat-topped C15, then another C14 followed by a couple of (perhaps) C12s and then at last ...



... a wonderful Norman doorway announces the church's true C11-12 provenance.

The north wall has even fewer beauty spots to liven up its weathered face but some kind soul has provided a good hat in the shape of a copper roof and this must go a great way towards maintaining the building's longevity.



At the western end is a gravestone ...





... bearing the inscription ‘Richard, the son of Will & Frances Butters.’ I featured this gravestone in the February 2016 issue on Tottenhill where there is another ‘Butters’ inscription’ in a prominent position. ‘Butters’ and ‘Botolphs’ are frequent bedfellows.

The church being locked, I had to make the best of viewing the interior through the dusty windows and I did manage to get some reasonably decent photographs and I was intent on using these in this article but then, when I was three quarters of the way through writing it everything changed.

I spotted on the internet a poster about the church’s open day last September and on the poster was the telephone number of Philip Spencer who came valiantly to my rescue. It was Philip who had organised the open day and he had taken some wonderful photographs which he kindly sent to me. So from here on (with the exception of the font) these are Philip’s photos.



Rustic though it may be, this church is a treasure house. The chancel walls are not as thick as those of the nave (see arrow in the picture above) and this suggests that the chancel was a later addition. At the back of the picture, the C14 font is just visible lying close to the west wall.



Since I was unable to get into the church, this picture of the font was kindly provided by Kate at ktdesigns (<http://www.ktdesign-web.co.uk/>). Kate was fortunate enough to be one of those people who attended the 13 Sep 2015 Open Day and so was able to view the inside of the church.



This is Philip’s shot of the ‘Green Man’ which is carved on the font (also visible on the picture above). We have seen this ancient theme before and if you look for long enough you can see the Green Man’s face emerge from amongst the foliage.



These pictures give the church a wonderfully spooky but benign aura. Having seen Philip's photographs, Zina said that this is the one church of which she really regrets not having seen the inside. Another day perhaps?



She notes that the pews on the north side of the church differ slightly from those on the south side and that "the ends have poppy heads, pricket holes (to hold the candles) and the remains of animals' feet on the arm rests."



As Lyn Stilgoe (an SOSB member I am proud to note) writes in her admirable leaflet which was published for 'Church Tours 2007,' "the C15 medieval pews are a wonderful sight. How did they survive the nave being roofless?"



This arm rest is the only one which is intact. It features a shepherd with his crook and a dog. Traces of paint remain on the carving.





I am not an expert on pulpits but this C17 one is obviously exciting to those who are. Lyn Stilgoe describes it as being a two-decker which is almost turned into a three-decker by the nearest pew front “being divided in two, to provide a bookrest to the west and a seat for the clerk to the east.”



Philip’s view from the pulpit looking towards the back of the church shows, at the far end ...



... the font and the bell which, its inscription tells us, was cast in 1728 by Thomas Newman. It was originally hung on the west gable and after the church became redundant stood outside in a crate - but in 1987 was taken inside for safer storage.



Even these humble altar rails date from C17 and the altar itself is still being put to good use – but at the neighbouring church of St Mary’s, Beachamwell.



On the north wall of the sanctuary is an aumbry (seen here on the left) and on the south wall a piscina with a roll moulding to its arch.

### **Classification of the Shingham site**

It is conceivable that the foundation of this site as a Christian place of worship could date back as far as C7 and merit an ‘A’ classification.

### **Readers’ letters and emails.**

1. Mention of the town of Pocklington evoked some interesting memories from several people, three of whom were Marion Peel, Guy Hartfall and Duncan Hopkin.
2. Kind notes of thanks came from Father Pachomius, Jean Stone and Hilary Tolputt.

3. Penny Coggill also thanked me for past issues and offered some helpful advice. I hope she will find that it has been heeded in this issue! Penny also expressed her surprise that so few of the Scandinavian Botolph Churches have made contact with the society. There is good news on that frontier in that two new members, Rosemary and Clive Talbot, lived in Trondheim Norway for 20 years so Rosemary is going to make some enquiries of her contacts out there.

4. Anne Pegg wrote telling me that the guiding light behind our new Commonwealth War Memorial which is proposed for Dover is in fact her son John Pegg who is a landscape architect so I shall look out for him.

5. Chris Conn wrote to me about St Rumwold – about whom I know a little but regularly learn more as, uninvited, he constantly pops up in my life.

6. I am very grateful to Anne Dickinson for sending me several emails patiently explaining how to use Twitter to advertise my talk more widely.

She also sent the following notice:

**Saint Botolph's Day 2016 in Burton Hastings**

**We are having a Flower Festival at St Botolph's Church in Burton Hastings the weekend 17th-19th June 2016.**

**Theme: British Inventions during the lifetime of Her Majesty the Queen**

**You may be wondering 'why this weekend?'. Many of the arrangers in our small community are otherwise engaged the previous weekend and this weekend happily coincides with St Botolph's Day, 17th June.**

**During the main festival, from 10.30am to 4.30pm on 18th and 19th the church will be open to all. Refreshments will be served.**

**A special evensong will be held on Sunday 18th at 6.30pm, presided by the Bishop of Coventry.**

More details will be placed on the website:

<http://stbotolphsbh.org.uk>

and the Twitter Feed:

<https://twitter.com/StBotolphs>

Details have already been posted on 'A Church Near You':

<http://www.achurchnearyou.com/stbotolphsbh>

## **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!

### **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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Folkestone, Kent. 1st May 2013.