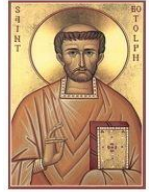




# The Botolphian

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: 42

1<sup>st</sup> October 2016

## Highlights this month

- St Botolph's church, Trunch, Norfolk.
- Welcome to new member Roy Tricker from Suffolk.
- Correspondence from Roy Tricker.

## Editorial

It seems to have been quite a hectic month but this has been caused partly by my being in Greece and partly by having to tie up the final arrangements for the Annual Luncheon.

I am delighted to say that we did, at the last minute, manage to add one more attendee bringing the number up to 20. I am sorry that there are not more but I am sure that we will all have a good time and I am really looking forward to our visit to the Fitzwilliam Museum.

**T**runch, Norfolk.



**Approach:** From North Walsham, take the B1145 Trunch Road and the church will be evident as soon as you reach the village.

**Location: Latitude/Longitude:** 52.8626, 1.3963  
Back Street, Trunch, Norfolk NR28 0AH.

**Key:** The church is unlocked daily from 8.30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

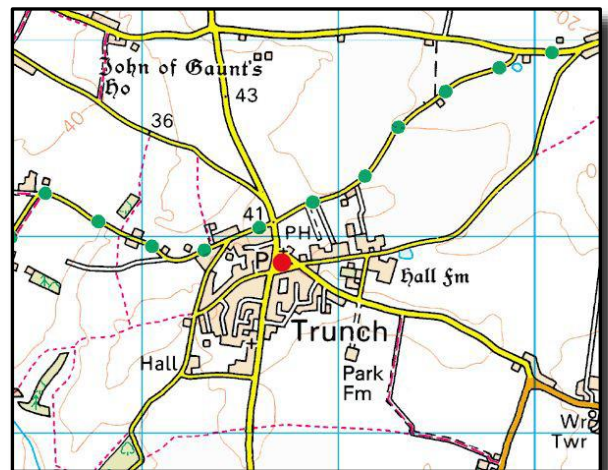
**Contact:** The keyholder is Mrs K Clarke, 8 Primrose Close, Trunch..

**Vicar:** Rev Andrew Jones, The Rectory, Knapton Road Trunch North Walsham NR280QE

Tel: 01263 722218.

**Services:** Holy Communion is held most Sundays at 10.45 a.m.

**Listed Grade:** I

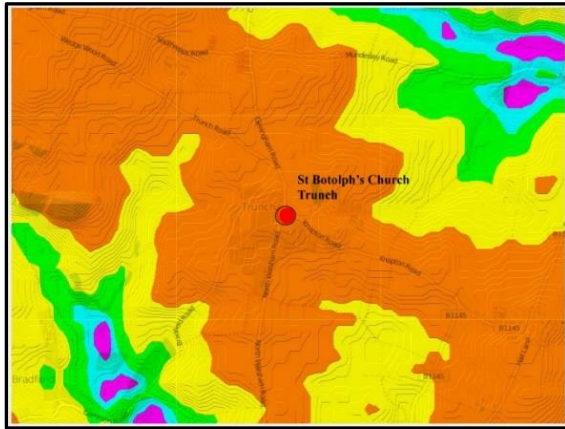


This is the first of the Norfolk Cluster of St Botolph churches and so I feel I have to tread carefully, looking for special signs relating to this church which might be repeated in other churches within the cluster.

I also feel that I have to prepare the ground – to look at C14 Norfolk closely to see what might have fostered a glut of church building during this period. This therefore of necessity will be a

slightly longer issue than usual but the churches featured during the next few months will 'feed' from the same basic research.

'Trunch' is said to be Celtic meaning 'a wood on a promontory.' It lies 6 miles southeast of Cromer and three miles north of North Walsham



The church is located right at the top of a mound suggesting that it is unlikely to be a church of C7 foundation as that would usually have been positioned further down the slope.

### The Wool Churches

Norfolk was, in mediaeval days, the richest county in England and its fortunes came mainly from sheep – specifically from the wool that those sheep provided.

We have in earlier *Botolphians* already mentioned the East Anglian 'Wool Churches' which were built to mark the growing prosperity of local communities. Landowners would often plough money into such buildings in the hope that they would remain permanent monuments to their high status and magnanimity.

*Classic* Wool Churches are to be found at Long Melford, Southwold, Cawston, Worstead and Lavenham – none of which are dedicated to Saint Botolph. Wool Churches were sometimes 'built from scratch' but more often were built on the site of a more humble predecessor.

Today Norwich has more mediaeval churches than anywhere else in Europe.

### Domesday

The Domesday Record tells us that 'Tronchet' was, in 1066, subject to Earl Harold (together with Edric the Steersman, Ketil and Earl Ralph the Constable). After the Conquest and the death of Earl Harold, William de Warenne became the Lord and Tenant-in-Chief.

At that time Trunch contained 33 households (rating it as 'quite large') and (surprisingly – but see later) one church. Domesday also records that within 3 miles of Trunch, there were five other churches - Gimingham, Southrepps, North Walsham, Mundesley and Paston.



### The Church itself

St Botolph's Church Trunch is nicely situated in an imposing spot in the centre of the village. It is surrounded by an attractive churchyard where we found Ernie Garland mowing the grass.



Both he and his wife Jean were a mine of information and help. They started by pointing out – high on the roof - a plaque which bears the inscription *Kathryn Clarke Churchwarden 2010* and explaining that, when a roof is replaced, it is the churchwarden's privilege to be thus recorded.



Entering the church via the south porch, the first thing to notice are two Mass Dials - ringed in the picture above where you also see Jean Garland and my wife Zina.

Mass dials have been discussed on these pages before but, for the benefit of new members, Mass Dials (sometimes called Scratch Dials) are features which are found on the southern walls of many mediaeval churches. They are sundials which were used to regulate the times of church services.



Those on the outside of the porch are still exposed to the sun and they clearly post-date an earlier dial hidden in the shadows on the jamb of the inner door



The south porch was added in c.1450 so this inner dial must be of a very early date.



Trunch is a large church of which the nave and chancel measure, according to my calculations, about 30 metres in total length.

The Rood Screen seen above is one of the church's three major treasures – a survivor of Henry VIII's decree that all rood lofts should be destroyed.

The rood loft (which would have been above the screen) has indeed gone and the remaining carved masterpiece dates from 1502 – only three decades before Henry made his decree.

One can see why the then church incumbent would have been keen to preserve as much as he could of such a comparatively new work of art and beauty.



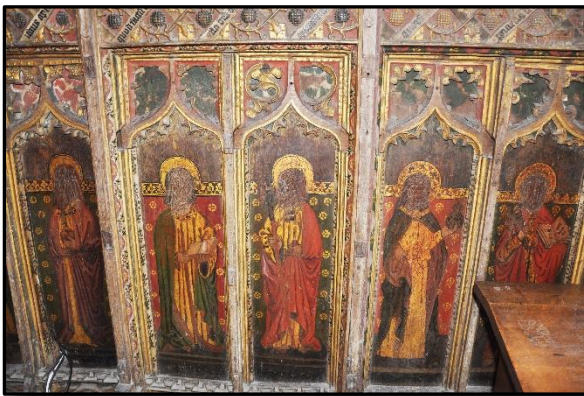
C16 or by William Dowsing's Puritans between 1643 and 1644.

From north to south the saints are: St Thomas, St Philip, St James the Less, St Matthew, St James the Greater, St Peter, St Paul, St Andrew, St John, St Jude, St Simon and St Bartholomew.

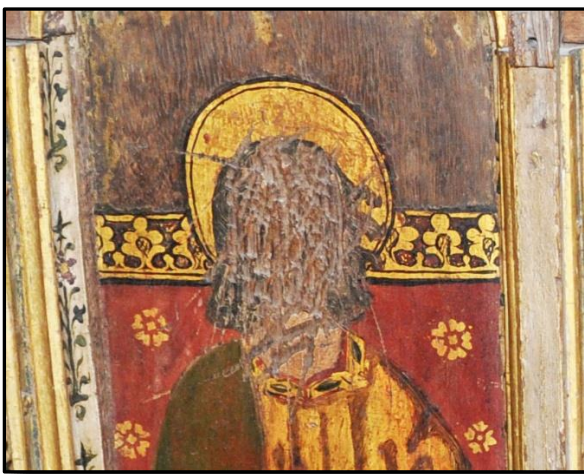
Five miles to the south of Trunch lies St Botolph's Church Westwick (which will of course feature in a later *Botolphian*) where there we found a rood screen of similar provenance. The difference is that Westwick's screen was restored in C19 and has all the saints' faces intact.

Coming back to the Trunch screen, each arch has unpainted areas with dowel holes as if another structure had hung in front of them at some time - perhaps for secrecy or for protection.

Each half of the screen has three lower bays containing three groups of two saints surmounted by crocketed ogeed arches.



Although the work is still richly coloured after 500 years ...



... the faces of the saints have been defaced – either by King Henry VIII's Commissioners in



Take a few paces backwards now and look up and you will see one of the earliest hammer-beam roofs in the country. It is still in fine condition ...

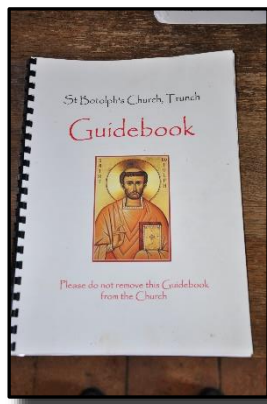


... as can be seen from this detail. The roof is said to have been constructed in 1380 which makes it even older than that of Westminster Hall although 1486 is mentioned as an alternative date.

## The Chancel



The C14 Chancel is believed to be the oldest part of the church.



At the back of the nave I found a comprehensive set of guidebooks written by Anne and Peter Horsefield and they tell us that the evidence points to the 'prior presence of a wooden church' on the site. Supporting this is the fact that the list of Rectors of Trunch begins at 1294 whereas the Rural Deanery of Repps (of which the church was part) only has a list of Deans from 1304 to 1339.

The world of architecture was changing quickly in those days – whereas the building of Trunch Church was happening rather slowly. As Anne Horsefield points out: *The chancel must have taken several summers to complete as not more than 10 feet of masonry could be raised with unconsolidated lime mortar ...* Zina and I had already learned this lesson from David Knights at St Botolph's Shotesham a couple of days earlier when he showed us a neighbouring church which clearly demonstrated the problems faced by the builders regarding the slow setting of their mortar.

Anne points out that, looking at the walls, one can see more half-ball gallets (small stones inserted in the joints of the coarse masonry to protect the mortar joints) *low down* in the walls than higher

up. Gallets had to be used to prevent the weight of the upper wall causing the soft uncured mortar to squeeze out between the lower stones.



**The styles of architecture were changing apace.** Here, looking at the south wall of the chancel, the window on the left is of an older style than that on the right.



And moving round to the east window we find a window which is more recent still ...

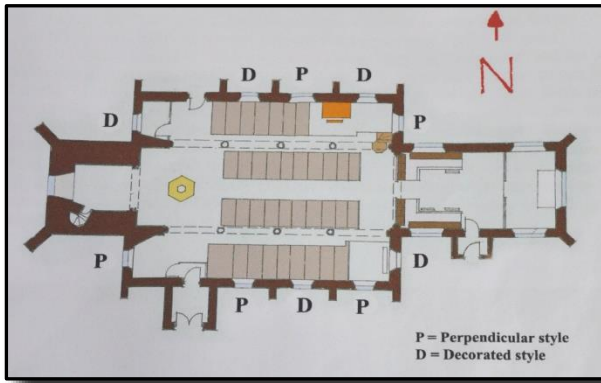


... and moving round the next corner to the north wall there are two Perpendicular-style windows of matching age but of vastly different design.

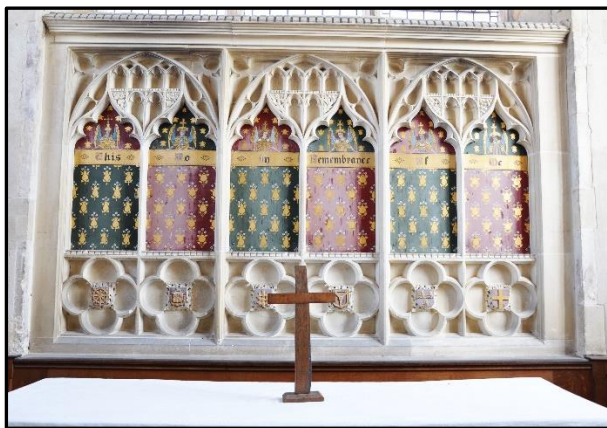
Reverting to the first of the three pictures, you will note the unusual way the buttress is attached to the priest's porch. Although this is quite rare, two similar examples can be found in East Anglia - one at Grundisburgh, Suffolk and another at Warham St Mary, North Norfolk. In Bryant's *Norfolk Churches* of 1900 Bryant quotes the architect Brandon as saying "... *this arrangement was probably had recourse to [sic] after the construction of the priests' doorway which is*

*Decorated, to resist an apprehended spreading of the walls in that spot and is a remarkable instance of the simple yet elegant manner in which the ancient architects surmounted any difficulty of the kind.”*

To help you with these dates and styles, let me share with you the very crude method that I use to memorise the dates of the three main styles of Gothic architecture (i.e. Early English, Decorated and Perpendicular). I think of these as architecture’s *teenage* years – thus the thirTEENth, fourTEENth and fifTEENth centuries are the periods in which the styles are found. Although one cannot be dogmatic about these dates the Decorated Style is classically said to be 1272-1377 and Perpendicular is 1377-1485 so really when using my formula a downward shift of about 25 years is called for.



The above plan annotated by Peter Horsefield and taken from the church guidebook shows the interesting and somewhat confusing distribution of the Decorated and Perpendicular style windows in this church.



In the sanctuary the reredos is an ornate but recent (1925) addition.



There are two piscinae in the chancel and it has been suggested that the reason for this is that the westernmost part of the chancel was completed first (as far as the wall piscina) and used for services while the easternmost part was still being built. This is borne out by the sequence of window styles we have just discussed.



In the north wall of the chancel near the C19 oak altar rail, there is a ‘Squint’ – technically termed a ‘Hagioscope.’

There are various theories about the use to which hagioscopes were put but to me the most plausible one is that it was a sound tunnel designed to allow those who were unable to gain access to the church – either because they were unbaptised or penitents or simply because there was lack of room – to hear the tinkling of the sacring (sic) bell.

It is interesting that most of these hagioscopes (or low side windows) were inserted between 1225 and 1350. This is one of several things that makes me wonder if this part of the chancel is pre-1350.

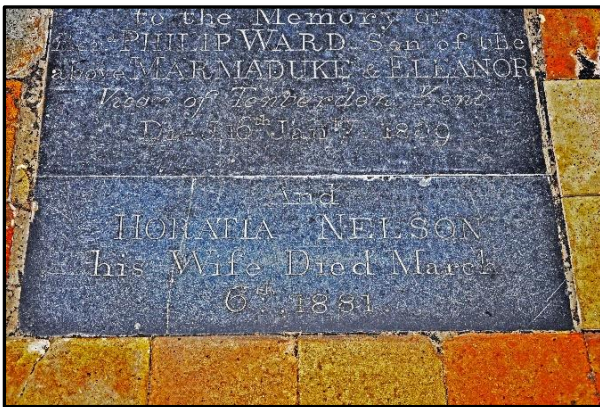


Horatia (who is not buried in Trunch but may well have been married here) was the daughter of Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton. Philip Ward's father was 'a long time Curate of Trunch.'

No sign of the hagioscope can be seen outside however and a rather ugly oil tank and pipe makes examining the wall doubly difficult. Observant readers with local knowledge will see that I have photographically excised the oil pipe in order to demonstrate my estimated position of the hagioscope's original external access. I was sorely tempted to excise the tank too ... ! Of the blocked doorway that can be seen on the outside wall, there are no signs internally.



This is a view looking from the chancel past the choir stalls, through the rood screen and into the nave where the glorious font canopy takes pride of place.



Admiral Lord Nelson had many connections in this part of Norfolk as we shall see in later issues and the ledger stone lying under the carpet just west of the altar rail is a memorial to the Ward family including:

Revd PHILIP WARD Son of the  
above MARMADUKE & ELEANOR  
Vicar of Tenterden, Kent  
Died 16<sup>th</sup> January 1859  
And  
HORATIA NELSON  
His Wife. Died March  
6<sup>th</sup> 1881.



Before returning to the nave however, take note of the early C15 Return Stalls (so-called because they face east unlike the choir stalls) with, beneath the lifting seats, misericord shelves which give support when the occupants are standing.



Also, note the ‘sound box vents’ at the base of the choir stalls. The stalls are raised on a platform in order to amplify the voices of the choir. This is the first time I have seen this feature although apparently the same technique was used in Henry VII’s Lady Chapel in Westminster Abbey.



From 1646 to 1750 the choir became a classroom and there is ample evidence of the schoolboys’ traditional habit of carving defacements into their desks.



Now we come to the jewel in the crown (or perhaps ‘the crown over the jewel’ is more appropriate?) – the font canopy.



This magnificent structure of c. 1500 is one of only four in England – the others being at St Peter Mancroft in Norwich (c.1450), St Mary’s Luton (c. 1340) and Durham Cathedral (1662). It is carved in oak and, despite having some missing and some damaged pieces, it is still an item of great splendour.





There are six five-sided columns which support the canopy thus creating thirty panels which depict a mass of symbolic animals, plants and people.

The font itself (c.1350 although it is so well preserved that it looks more recent) is made of limestone. The stem, with insets of faced flints, is probably a little more recent.

### **The circumstances in which this church was built**

I had started my research into this church with the view that it was a Wool Church beneficently provided by a particular sponsor whose name would eventually become apparent. This never happened. Although there are many memorials in the church, there is not one which stands out as being to a principal sponsoring family. I was also surprised (and delighted) to find Anne Horsefield's assertion that the church had a Saxon predecessor – and that the Domesday Record rather confirmed this.

We are left therefore with a church of which the building work is said to have started in c. 1380 on the site of a previous wooden church.

In order to absorb the flavour of Norfolk during the period in which the church was built, I have benefitted by reading Pamela Nightingale's thesis '*Norwich, London, and the regional integration of Norfolk's economy in the first half of the fourteenth century*' and a great deal of what follows has been gleaned from this:

At the beginning of C14, Norfolk was the most commercially progressive of all English counties and as a consequence the town of Norwich expanded quickly - but its fortunes fluctuated greatly. On the upside, by the middle of the century over 120 markets had been founded in the county and rural fairs were held as often as three times per year.

This was brought about in part by the important fairs such as Boston in Lincolnshire (St Botolph's Fair) and St Ives in Cambridgeshire being forced into decline after (i) the expulsion of the Flemings in 1270 and (ii) the start of the war with France in 1294. As they declined, Norwich thrived and, by 1285, had become a major trading centre.

In her thesis Nightingale shows that 'a radius of about twenty miles marks the effective limit of a town's regional influence.' It is interesting to note that the main cluster of Norfolk Botolph churches lie within 20 miles of Norwich. With that sort of distance people could just about

manage to travel there and home again within a day.

Throughout England, the years of 1305-9 saw dramatic economic growth due to the export of large quantities of wool at high prices. Norfolk led the field in this – selling slightly inferior wool abroad while using the better quality to make local cloths and worsted. Norfolk barley was renowned for making the best ale and malt and the export of barley and wheat added to the economic upsurge. The merchants of Amiens traded with Norwich eagerly exchanging their specialist product of woad for Norfolk wool.

This economic growth gradually spread into the surrounding countryside. In the north of the county for example, at North Creake, an abbey which owned a large flock of sheep held four highly profitable fairs every year.

And then there were the downsides: after five years of famine between 1315 and 1319 there followed a period of cattle disease; in 1321 the barley harvest failed and there was an outbreak of sheep murrain. Two more bad harvests struck in 1330 and 1331 – but then things improved again. In 1340 there was an all-time high but this was counterbalanced in 1349 when the Black Death arrived and Norwich's 7,000 inhabitants were reduced to 2,000; within eighteen months almost half the population of England were dead.

This then is the sort of world into which the C14 St Botolph's Church, Trunch was born and it might go some way towards explaining the evidence of start-stop building work.

### **Is this church a little earlier than dated?**

Various matters make me question the date of this church and I wonder if the shortened chancel was in fact completed *before* the advent of the Black Death – i.e. in *early* rather than late C14. This would account for the 1294 reference to the Rector of Trunch, the presence of both the hagioscope and wall piscina and the erratic nature of the construction periods.

Architecturally late C14 might appear sound (and this may indeed be the date that the church was finished) but socially it would seem logical for a sponsor to want to create such an edifice to demonstrate his business acumen and ingratiate himself with the local population during the period when trade was good. Using Nightingale's dates above and tying them in with the Rector's dates and the hagioscope it seems likely that the sponsor would have started his project between 1305 and 1309. After the first phase of building the (short)

chancel had been completed and put to use, changing circumstances may have caused further plans to remain dormant. It was not perhaps until the mid 1340s that the second phase of building the nave and the tower and extending the chancel could be started.

If this were the case then the original sponsor or sponsors and their families might all have succumbed to the Black Death before the building was finished. It would be logical to expect the completion to be delayed for several decades.

Clearly this is surmise on my part and it would only be by studying diocesan and other records that further clues might be found, confirming or denying this.

This is the first Norfolk Church to be featured in these pages and, as the months go by, it will be interesting to look at the other churches in the area since their building will all have been similarly affected by the 'boom and bust' periods of Norfolk's fortunes.

And what of the predecessor wooden church? Could it have been a C7 chapel founded by St Botolph himself? I am bound to say that, at the moment, I really do not think so. Again we must wait and see if there is evidence of the other Norfolk Botolph Churches having wooden predecessors.

### **Classification**

I would suggest B(ii) as a classification for the original foundation of this site – i.e. I believe that it is likely that the first church was built here between 800 and 1066.

### **Thanks**

Many thanks to Ernie and Jean Garland for their hospitality at St Botolph's Church, Trunch.

### **Readers' letters and emails.**

1. As the result of an introduction by Guy Hartfall, **Roy Tricker** (of whom many of you will have heard since he is an authority on church history) wrote to me and kindly sent me some pictures of sketches of Thurleston church which he had discovered in the County Record Office. I am delighted to welcome Roy as a new member.
2. There *has* been a lot of other correspondence but most of it has been concerned with the Annual Luncheon that is going to be held at the Hilton Cambridge on 12 October at 12.30 for 1 p.m. and afterwards at the Fitzwilliam Museum. I hope I have not missed out reporting any non-Luncheon correspondence which may have become buried.

Actually I do not think I have missed any but if this is the case then please remind me and I will add it to the next issue.

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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**

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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.

#### **Typical Characteristics of Early St Botolph Churches.**

1. All are in the eastern half of England
2. Most have Saxon foundations.
3. Many lie with 3 miles of a Roman road or well-used waterway.
4. Most are situated close to the bottom of an escarpment but well clear of water levels.
5. Many are strategically placed in areas which represent the beginnings, middles and ends of long journeys.

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Folkestone, Kent. 1st May 2013.