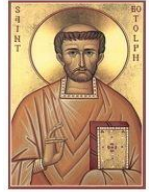




The Botolphian

Newsletter of
The Society of Saint Botolph

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

Issue Number: 45

1st January 2017

Highlights this month

- St Botolph's church, Hevingham, Norfolk.
- It gives me great pleasure to welcome the following new members: Deirdre Barnes (Hythe, Kent); Linda Clark (Hevingham); Revd Margaret McPhee (Hevingham); Shirley Mather (Hevingham).
- Correspondence from Revd William Howard, John McConnell, Heather Flack, Peter Horsefield, Anne Dickinson, Guy Hartfall and Kathleen Tyson.

Editorial

Firstly, I hope you all had a Very Happy Christmas and are still enjoying the remains of the festive spirit – and secondly, of course, Zina and I would like to wish you all a Very Happy and Prosperous New Year.

In mentioning 'prosperous' I am particularly thinking of our featured church this month. When Zina and I visited Hevingham in August we arrived to the sad sight of green tarpaulin covering the roof from whence (an estimated) £40,000's worth of lead had just been stolen.



This of course was a massive blow to the church. There seems to have been some consolation in that the replacement cost now seems to be a little less but this still leaves £15,000 to be raised even taking into account the £10,000 received from insurance and grant money and £900 (including Gift Aid) donated at a recent gift day. I therefore particularly wish St Botolph's Hevingham a Prosperous New Year and hope that funds can soon be found.

It seems to me that, in some ways, many churches are somewhat like handsome ancient grey elephants – each with their own living character – which, having been 'plonked' in their fields hundreds of years ago, have ever since been casting benevolent eyes over their flock – sometimes at close range and sometimes from afar. They were originally of course not 'plonked' at all – the sites of their foundations were chosen with great care – but I use this term because we can look at many of them today and think that they seem out of place – and this month's church, St Botolph's Hevingham, is a little like that.

Quite a number became *white* elephants early in their lives. We hear of churches which, even before the Reformation, rapidly became redundant and fell into ruins as their communities either died (perhaps as the result of plague) or moved on. As I research this subject I find too many well-constructed and beautiful churches which are heading in the same direction . . . and, I am glad to say, that, with the arrival of its new rector, Revd Margaret McPhee, there is renewed hope that Hevingham will not follow this route.

Reverting to the elephant analogy - it makes me sad to see these wonderful 'animals' still standing faithfully in the position in which they were placed – still eager and willing to serve – waiting

hopefully for a community to come and breathe life back into them again. Those that are still alive inevitably have their loyal ‘mahouts’ who tend and care for them and keep them going. Some of course finally succumb and die, like St Botolph’s at Skidbrooke Lincolnshire, and all we are then left with are their skeletal remains which stick up in a desert – a still-proud structure now acting as a memorial to the fact that the region was once the site of a large Christian community.

With the continuing increase in the United Kingdom’s population and the massive building programme that is going on at the moment, it may of course be that, if we can only keep these precious ‘elephants’ alive for long enough, a new community will grow up nearby and breath life back into them.

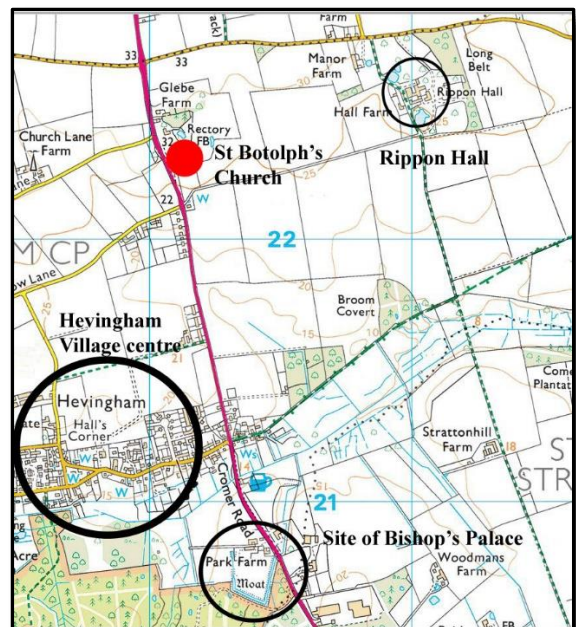
The longer I write these newsletters, the more I begin to understand what makes St Botolph Churches tick. As each monthly publication date draws near I approach it with a certain amount of dread knowing that I will commit myself to two or three days’ hard work researching another church. I look at each ‘elephant’ and think to myself “You don’t look very interesting – what am I going to find to write about in your case?” And yet, as the writing progresses, the dread turns to real joy and excitement as, almost invariably, I discover parts of this ‘elephant’s’ life that nobody (perhaps) has seen before. This ‘elephant’ has stood here for hundreds of year watching life going on around it. Some parts of its body have been amputated but other parts have had appendages built on. It probably started very small and is now very large. I find it a privilege to write the life stories of these beautiful beasts.



Church Feature

Hevingham, Norfolk.

Approach: *The church lies 8 miles north of Norwich so take the A1402 Aylsham Road and after 3.3 miles turn right on the A140 Cromer Road. 4.6 miles later you will pass the sign for the village of Hevingham on your left but you need to drive another 1,000 yards before you see a lay-by on your right. N.B. It is the second opening of the lay-by which is the IN one! Park here just outside the church.*



Location: A140, Hevingham NR10 5LY;
Lat/Long: 52.7536, 1.2605; NGR TG201223
Key: Available from Linda Clark (Church Fabrics Officer) at 01603 754-325 or Derek Muspratt (Churchwarden) at 01603 755-432.

Rector: *Revd Margaret McPhee, The Rectory, 1b Gordon Godfrey Way, Horsford, Norwich NR10 3SG. 01603 893108.*

Benefice: *Horsford, Felthorpe and Hevingham.*

Services: *Sundays at 11 a.m. but these are variable so it is best to telephone first if you are thinking of attending.*

Listed Grade: **I**

As you will see from the map above, the church stands well outside the village – hence my point in the editorial about the church seeming out of place.

In some unknown part of the Anglo-Saxon period England was sub-divided into manors. This administrative system continued until C17 when civil powers were granted to parishes.

Francis Blomefield in volume 6 of his *Essay Towards A Topographical History of the County of Norfolk* (London, 1807) tells us (pp.374-381) that at the time of the Domesday Survey the Hevingham manor was held by a priest and that William the Conqueror confirmed the priest's holding on the strength of his promise that he would sing three masses every week for Duke William's soul and the souls of his relations. The priest subsequently bequeathed his holding to the Bishop of Norwich and all successor bishops, and they continued to hold it until it was appropriated by the monarchy. In 1250 the manor passed to the then Bishop of Norwich, Walter de Suffield, who built there a grand moated palace in which, over the years, many other bishops resided.

It seems (but the details of this are not easy to untangle) that part of the manor comprised a *berewick* – that is to say 'a detached portion of farmland that belonged to the manor but was reserved for the lord's own use.' Even as early as Domesday the berewick (known then as Rippetun, Cats or Criketots) was held by the Bishop of Thetford but by 1215 it had passed to Roger le Chat - and the Cat family continued to hold it until about 1450. I will come back to this later but for the moment let us return to the church.



The building is mainly C14 and is constructed of flint with stone dressings and lead, slate and tile roofs.



The 2-stage massive tower has only one major window which is of early Perpendicular C15 style. Above the window can be seen a single light sound hole and above that is a 2-light belfry opening with cusped 'Y' tracery.



Apparently-friendly gargoyles look down from the south and north corners.

Although the south transept's window is still of Decorated style its tracery is of a reticulated pattern – perhaps stronger and more functional – but to my mind less beautiful – than the windows of the nave which, although more delicate, have withstood the ravages of time and thus proved their adequate functionality.



The chancel with its Early English-style 'Y' tracery lights is a bit of a surprise because they, and the priest's door are actually C19 restorations as are both the east window and the eastern-most of the windows in the chancel's south wall.

The C14 nave has particularly beautiful windows of the Decorated Period style with fine curvilinear tracery of a 'petal' or 'butterfly' pattern in their upper parts. The arrow indicates the position of an original C14 buttress which was incorporated into the transept when it was added in C15.



Moving round to the north side of the building, the original north transept arch is clearly outlined as indicated by the two arrows above. The transept was added in C15 and contained a chapel dedicated to St John the Baptist. The chapel in the South Transept was dedicated to St Mary the Virgin.



At the junction of the north wall of the nave and the tower are holes which provide for light and ventilation in the belfry stair-shaft. A similar single light can be seen on the other side of the church between the tower and the south porch. In this case it provides light and ventilation in the parvise stair-shaft.

The parvise is the name given to the room above the south porch. Its Perpendicular style window contains two niches for saints. Parvises are rarely found but there is another only a few miles away at St Mary's Church, Martham and this bears a very similar window with niches. I must say that one of the least attractive features I found in this church was the grey wooden planking above the porch's south door which in my view detracts from its beauty.



As we will see shortly, the church has much evidence of Reformation and/or Puritan attack with the result that the two niches are now unoccupied. During the Civil War both the porch and the parvise were used to store ammunition. Today there is no floor in the parvise.



The doorway leading into the church has an attractive hood moulding with decorative dark stone worked into the spandrels.



The C14 hexagonal font has cloistered columns at the angles with mutilated figures between. The mutilations include the crucifixion depicted on the westernmost panel.



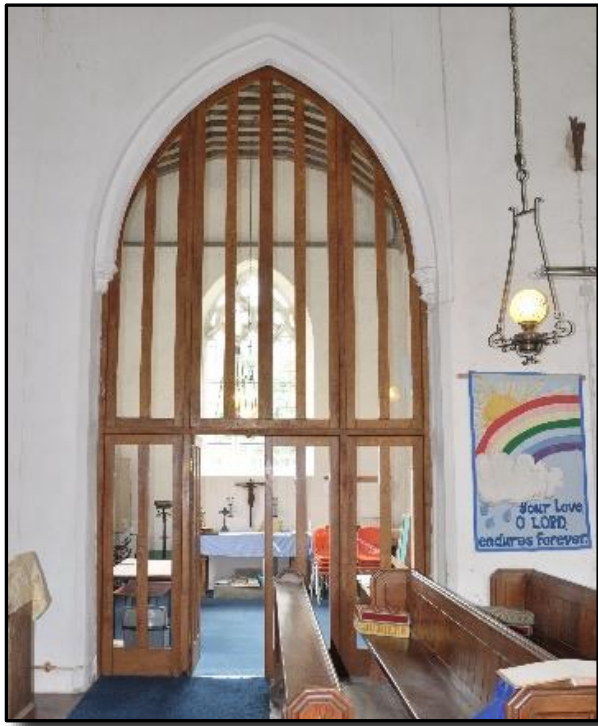
Standing in the nave and looking back towards the western wall there is a central squint at the belfry and a bell-ringing balcony below. Behind the open south door on the left is a C15 oak door which opens to the parvise stairs. This feature is reflected by another doorway on the right side of the picture; this doorway leads to the belfry-stairs.



Looking eastwards (and John Sennett from Swyncombe will be pleased to see that I have included real people in this one – Zina on the left of course and, on the right, Linda Clark who kindly opened the church for us and generously gave up her time to show us around) you will see to each side of the chancel arch a corbel which would, prior to 1547, have supported the rood beam. This in turn, before the Reformation, would have supported a figure of the crucified Christ with a candle on each side for illumination.



On the north wall just behind the pulpit is a blocked-up doorway which once opened to the steps to the rood loft. There is still much conjecture as to whether or not the rood loft was routinely used as a pulpitum to read the gospel or deliver sermons.



On the opposite side of the church is the archway which leads to the south transept. By C15 the plan view of the church was cruciform in shape - before the destruction of the north transept.



The chancel (and, in passing, one might mention that this name comes from the Italian 'cancelli' which means 'lattice' and refers to the lattice work often featured in the rood screen which separated chancel and nave).



The altar consists of a heavy stone 'Mensa' which was recovered from the floor of the church having been placed there during the Reformation when it was decreed that altars should consist only of wood. Five crosses are cut into the stonework – these symbolise Christ's five wounds.



The Angle Piscina is interesting – not only because of its beauty but also because it places its date, and hence that of the chancel, squarely at c. 1300 since the provision of access from two different angles was only fashionable for a short period. To the west of the piscina is a sedilia and to the west of this . . .



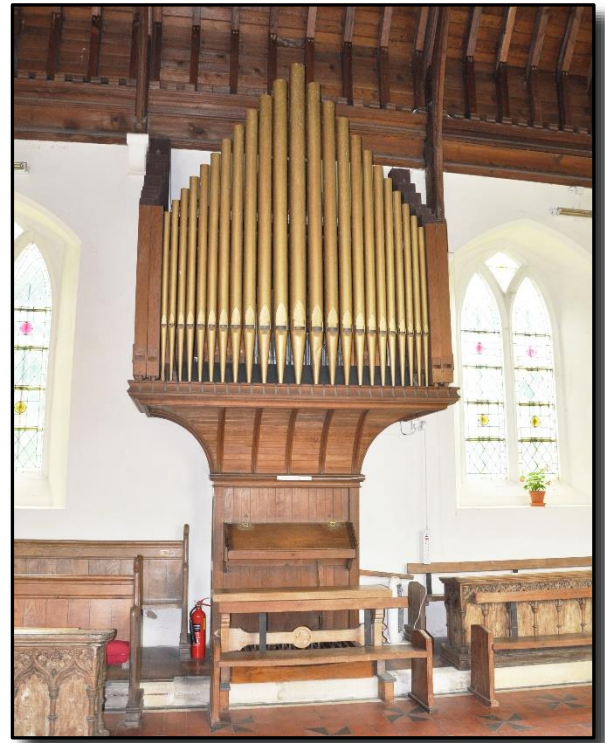
. . . is a tomb arch – hidden behind some choir stalls. I have found no information as to whose tomb this originally contained.



But they are not just any old choir stalls. These four C14 finely carved desks or benches are the pride and joy of the church. They came originally from the parvise above the south porch.



It has been suggested that they were school benches but this surely cannot have been their original function. The panels of the blind arcade seem highly redolent of the apostle panels we saw at Westwick in last month's *Botolphian* (as shown below). A trivial observation is that two of the benches have 13 panels at the front, one has 10 and the other has 14.



I have no details of the organ but it is an impressive structure which fits in neatly.



A great deal of love and attention has gone towards the maintenance of this church as can be seen by the little touches such as the flowers on the cills.

A feature which should not be missed (although I must have done so because I find I have no photographs which are of high enough quality to print) are the carved wooden angels at the ends of the beams of the (restored) hammerbeam nave roof.



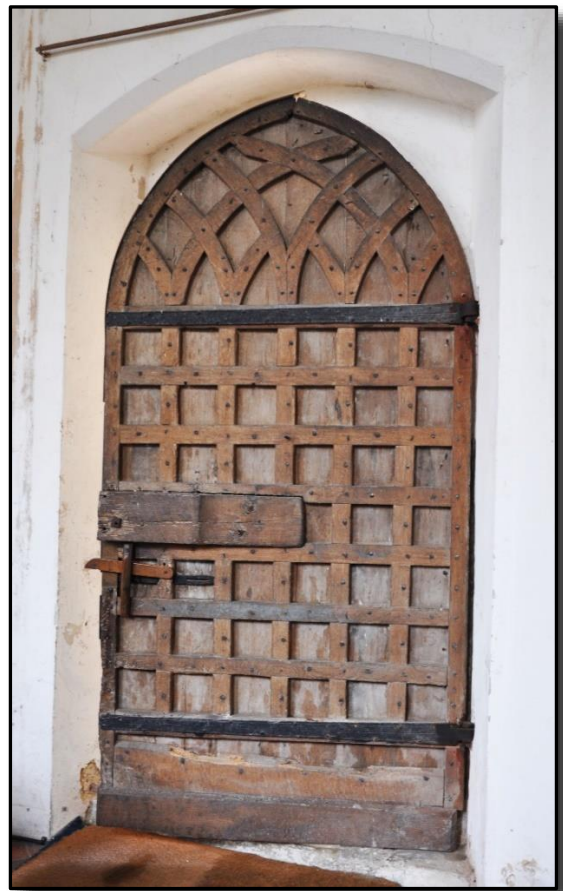
On each side of the chancel arch there is a squint for visual communication between the chancel and the nave.



The chandelier is counter-balanced by a massive weight which allows for easy-lowering in order to light the candles . . . and to clean the brass!



The magnificent brass chandelier holds 20 candles. As the inscription tells us, it was originally donated in 1741 to St George's Church Great Yarmouth but was purchased for £4 in 1882 by the then rector during the refurbishment of St Botolph's.



The C15 oaken south door still bears its original hinges and massive lock.



The north door is similar but the guide book tells us that originally it had an 'iron strap which locked in place a wooden pole which went across the doorway into slots in the masonry.'

You will note the stored village sign with its insignia of crossed brooms. Historically broom-making was a staple industry of Hevingham.



The large sweet chestnut tree which stands in the grounds was planted in 1610. The leaves and the fruit still looked healthy enough when we visited but the guide book tells us that 'the tree suffers from "The Shakes" and looks venerable with age.'

Classification:

I have found no suggestion that this church had a Saxon predecessor. The Domesday Book records no church in Hevingham in 1086 although it lists the vill as being very large and having 50 households of which 12 were villagers, 30 were smallholders, 1 was a slave and 2 were freemen. Its tenant-in chief was Bishop William of Thetford.

The nearest church at that time was at Felthorpe which, at 44 households was also a 'very large' vill. Felthorpe, interestingly, is one of the few villages in the area that bears a Viking place-name and one might wonder if that first church was of Viking origin (see discussions in previous *Botolphians*).

Blomefield suggests that the name of Hevingham means 'The Village by the Low Meadows at the Water.' This quite surprises me because I can see no basis for this. Usually such a village's name would derive from the local tribe – in this case perhaps called the 'Hevinge'.

However – moving on and reverting to 'Rippetun': as I said in the introduction, the berewick passed sometime before 1215 to the Norman, Roger le Chat - and the Cat family continued to hold it until about 1450 after which it passed to the Thetfords. A short while before he died (in 1594) Andrew Thetford demolished the church's north transept and used the materials in a futile endeavour to maintain Rippon Hall which nevertheless proceeded to fall into ruin. It was sold to one Henry Hobart who (as far as I can make out) removed the lead from the roof (this brings back a painful memory of previous writing) and sold it and used the money to tile and renovate St Botolph's south transept. The transept had for many years been dedicated to St Mary and was the burial place of the 'Lords of the Cats.'

Blomefield goes on to tell us: '*a great number of the Cats and Thetfords are interred in these chapels but their memorials are all lost.*' Sir Roger had been a very successful businessman. He had created the family's wealth by judicious farming in C13 when, to his good fortune, the English weather was still passing through a warm and therefore productive period. His son William consolidated the wealth as did his grandson Henry. At the end of C13 it must have been Sir Roger's great-grandson John who decided to build the church and to dedicate it to Saint Botolph. It seems likely that his choice of saint might be partly a matter of following contemporary East Anglian custom or it maybe that he was also influenced by the presence of the Saint Botolph's

church at Norwich which stood close by the Hanseatic warehouse at Fye Bridge.

The body of the church was constructed and dedicated as planned. Later, the south transept was added and the chapel it contained was dedicated to Saint Mary the Virgin. The chapel in the north transept was dedicated to Saint John the Baptist.

I believe that the foundation of this church site was primarily the product of successful trading ventures which were closely linked with the Hanseatic League and I would give the site of Saint Botolph's Church Hevingham a 'C' classification.

Thanks

My thanks to Linda Clark for her hospitality during our visit.

Readers' letters and emails.

1. I had some wry comments about the eleventh hour delivery of last month's *Botolphian*. **Revd William Howard** (retired from Grimston) was still computing at 2339 so sent a jaunty message to confirm it had arrived before midnight.

2. **John McConnell** from Winchester Massachussets made a similar comment but the time difference meant my near-'felony' was not so obvious in his case.

3. **Heather Flack** expressed an interest in the Anglo-Saxon graves at Ryburgh.

4. **Peter Horsefield** (Trunch) commented on Westwick's bees pointing out that bumble bees are feral and produce no honey. He also felt that Revd Coleman must have had a sizeable apiary to produce an income sufficient to carry out the work on Westwick church. Secondly, on the subject of wooden chapels, he mentioned some C12 Stave Churches that he had visited in Norway and remarked on their ornate carvings and general decoration. His implication was that, whereas we tend to think of Saxon churches as being rather rudimentary, there is a chance, bearing in mind the high standard of Saxon jewellery, that our C7 churches might have been similarly decorated.

5. **Anne Dickinson** (Burton Hastings) wrote with general news which included details of their church's flower festival which was based on 'British Inventions during the Lifetime of the Queen' – which I thought was rather novel.

6. **Guy Hartfall** (Culpho) wrote with an exciting offer concerning this year's Luncheon. More news on this later.

7. **Kathleen Tyson** sent me the welcome news that she has graduated MA in Medieval History at King's College, London. Congratulations again Kathleen.

Please do not hesitate to write to me or send an email to 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 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: 'Hanseatic' churches.
D: None 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.