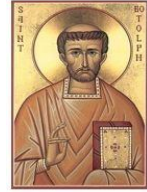




The Botolphian

Newsletter of
The Society of Saint Botolph

www.botolph.info



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

Issue Number: 60

1st April 2018

Highlights this month

- St Botolph's Church, Ruxley, Kent.
- It gives me great pleasure to welcome Pat Cocks, Gail Rogers, Sandra Marjanovic, Vincent Williams and David Baker as new members.
- Correspondence from Patricia Croxton-Smith, Paul Kemsley and Kathleen Tyson.

Editorial

So here we are at issue number 60 already - how time flies! There have been some rumblings of alarm amongst our members who realise that we are rapidly approaching that watershed number of "Seventy" which is the traditionally-quoted number of Saint Botolph churches.

"So what are you going to do about it?" comes the cry.

The basic answer is, that once I have *truly* 'visited' each one of the extant Saint Botolph Churches in these pages (and there some newly-discovered ones that have been added to the list) I shall go back to the beginning and start again, because . . .

. . . When I wrote the first *Botolphian* five years ago (inspired by Peter Buttle and his magnificent website) I had no idea of just *how* the newsletter was going to develop. The formula has evolved month by month and now, when I look back at the early issues I can see how woefully inadequate they were and I plan to correct that error by updating the earlier Church Features to a higher standard.

I wish you all a Very Happy Easter.

Church Feature

Ruxley, Kent.



Approach: From the A20 take the Orpington, Foots Cray, Bexley exit and follow the A223 (B2173) towards Bexley and Swanley. At the next roundabout take the third exit to Swanley (B2173). After 400 metres you will find the entrance to Ruxley Garden Centre on your right.

Location: Ruxley Manor Garden Centre, Maidstone Road, Sidcup DA14 5BG; 51.414362, 0.13287; Tel: 020 8300 0084.

Key: Access to the interior not usually available.

Garden Centre Website:

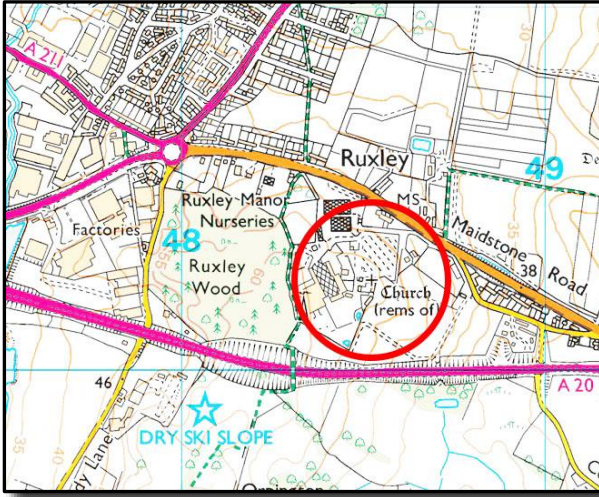
www.ruxley-manor.co.uk

The Coach House Restaurant:

www.coachhouseruxleymanor.co.uk

Tel: 020 8300 4241

Listed Grade: II



St Botolph's Church Ruxley is in the Sidcup area of Kent.



It is tucked away at the back of Ruxley Manor Garden Centre - the entrance to which is shown in the picture above. In 2007 the building was in a derelict state and English Heritage came to the rescue with a grant of £35,000 towards the cost of the £62,000 which was needed to help to preserve it.

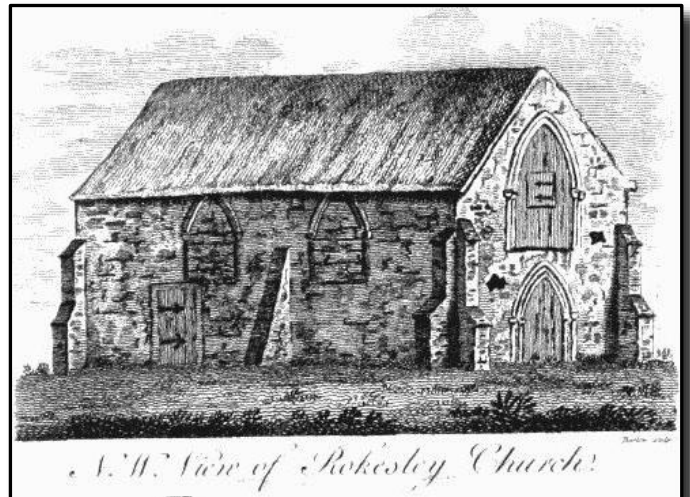


It was April 2011 when first I visited this church, and it was locked at the time. Since then the owner of the garden centre, James Evans, and I seem to have been chasing each other round in

circles trying to find a time that was mutually convenient for me to photograph the church's interior. Yesterday (Saturday) - at the eleventh hour of writing the article - we found a compromise and I jumped in the car and shot off to Ruxley to obtain the photographs without which the feature would have been incomplete. By this time however the article was 90% finished so quite a lot of rewriting was necessary - hence the late hour at which this email will reach you.



Without properly considering its *actual* date, it is immediately clear that the dimensions of this church are what one would expect of a *Saxon* structure - that is to say relatively small and double-celled - i.e. two equally-sized squares joined together to make a rectangle.



Its appearance has not changed much since Edward Hasted (1732-1812) sketched it in late C18 except that you will notice that the apices of the windows' Gothic arches peter out under the eaves of the roof.

Hasted was the much-celebrated author of *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent* (1788-1799) and was brought up 4 miles away at Sutton-at-Hone.



Like mine, Hasted's grandfather was employed at the Royal Navy's Chatham Dockyard; like me he went to school in Rochester. *Unlike me* he was then educated at Eton - but subsequently fell on hard times and ended up spending seven years in a debtors' prison. In 1807, his friend William Bouverie, First Earl of Radnor, rescued him by providing him with employment in Wiltshire.



One of the first things that struck me was that all around the building at the tops of the walls under the eaves there are knapped flints whereas the lower parts of the walls are mainly rubble.



The chapel's crude north doorway is also shown in Hasted's 1790 drawing. This doorway must have been cut through soon after 1557 when the building ceased to be used for worship and was converted into a barn.



Also (unusually) the flints are interspersed with what look to me like sandstone ashlars.

My initial thought was that there must have been a paucity of flint but I have now come to the conclusion that the sandstone was added to lighten the colour of the knapped flints which would otherwise have presented the building with a black line around its top.



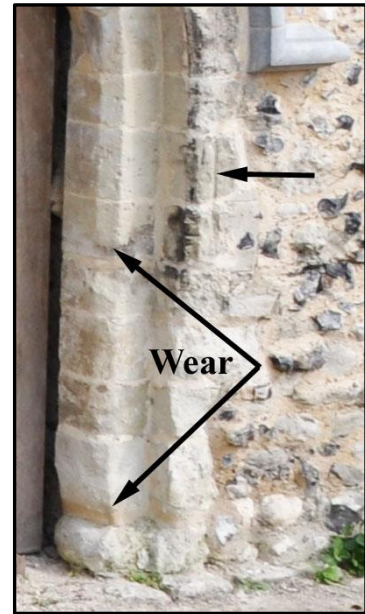
Once I had the benefit of seeing the wall from the inside it became clear that the height of the walls had been increased by half a metre - using similar ashlar to those used on the outside. This would presumably have been done when the roof was restored in 2007 - although the work looks older than that - so perhaps I have my dates wrong here?



The modern cement window frames would have been installed at the same time. Wood-framed netting is used to keep the pigeons out.



Moving round to the west end we can see a modern hood moulding over an older sandstone-framed gothic west doorway which is presumably original. Again there is a hotchpotch of stones with a concentration of flints in the middle of the wall and sandstone circumferentially.



At low level the right hand side of the doorway shows signs of excessive wear compared with the sharper cut stones above suggesting the regular passage of overflowing barrow-loads of materials of some sort. Halfway up on the right side (arrowed) is a line with what seems to be the letter 'L.' I have no idea if this has any significance.



The brick buttresses, which at first sight look modern are found on closer inspection to be made of hand-made bricks - some of them intentionally flashed black by special roasting characteristic of pre-1885 production.

The top central part of the buttress has been repaired by a rubble mixture similar to that which has been used on the lower walls. This would suggest that the brickwork is older than the rubble applications. Bearing in mind that the buttresses were evident in Hasted's c.1790 sketch we might assume that the bricks date from at least a hundred years earlier.



Exploring the site a little further I found similar bricks at the elegant Coach House Restaurant . . .



. . . and at the manor house itself as seen below . . .



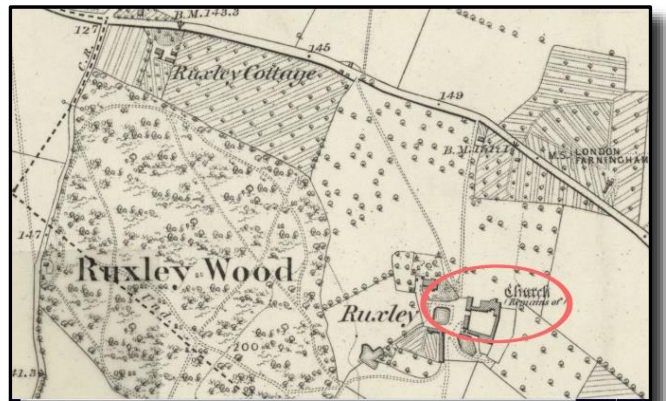
. . . so I think we can assume that this work on the church was done at the same sort of time that the manor house was built - i.e. C17.



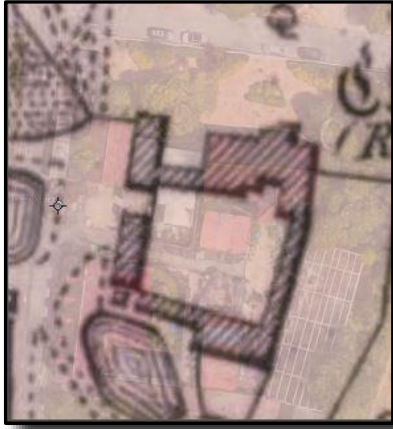
This is not the sort of stained glass west window that we are *used* to seeing!



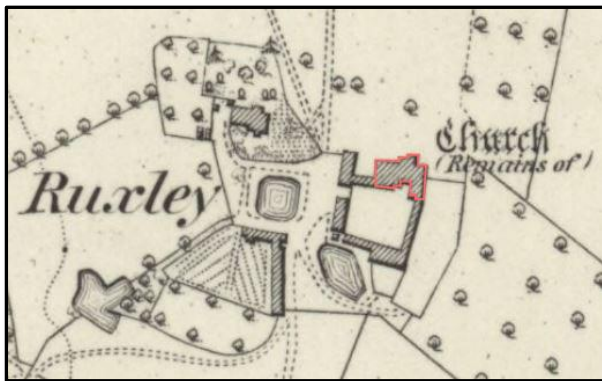
This is a different sort of south porch too! Here a large wagon entrance has been cut into the south wall and this weather-boarded extension added.



The Ordnance Survey map of 1870 shows a rather larger structure than we might expect - with 'Church (remains of)' appended to it.



But when we take Google's satellite picture and overlay it with the 1870 map it becomes clear that the 'church' part is only the block at the northeast corner. To the south of the church itself there seems to have been a courtyard surrounded by out-buildings which were, perhaps, stables?



Looking again at the map, there is an extension of some sort on the northern aspect of the church. Note, incidentally, that it is continually referred to as 'church' rather than 'chapel.' This implies that it was a *parish* church - not a subsidiary.



When we look at the wall itself we can see all sorts of scars which must mark the places where the extension was attached.



I was puzzled for a long while by this free-standing brick-built structure but ultimately came to the conclusion that, being immediately outside what we will eventually discover was a sometime stable door, it might have been used as a mounting block.

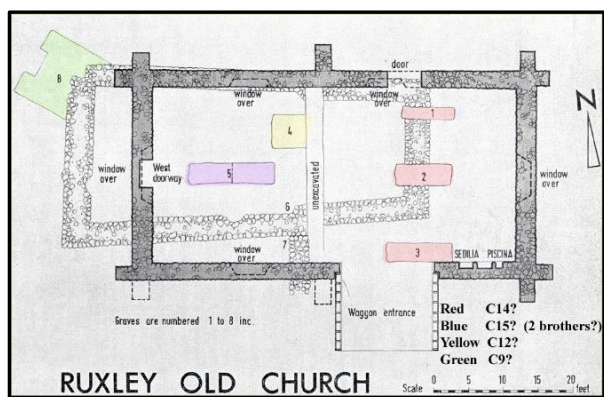


The north wall has been defaced by many brick repairs which are mirrored *inside* the church. If we discount cannon balls as being perpetrators of the damage then it looks as if apertures might have been cut into the walls for the emergence of wooden chutes to transfer produce from the upper floor of the barn to be bagged below.



Wherever one looks the brickwork repairs and restructurings continue to appear in a random fashion. Even in Hasted's 1790 sketch the north doorway appears to be edged with brickwork. One might suspect that the frames were originally made of wood and that when this rotted away it

was replaced with bricks. This must have been done a long time ago however - perhaps c.1690?



Inside, on the south east wall, are the sedilia for the priests or servers to rest their feet during long Elizabethan sermons.

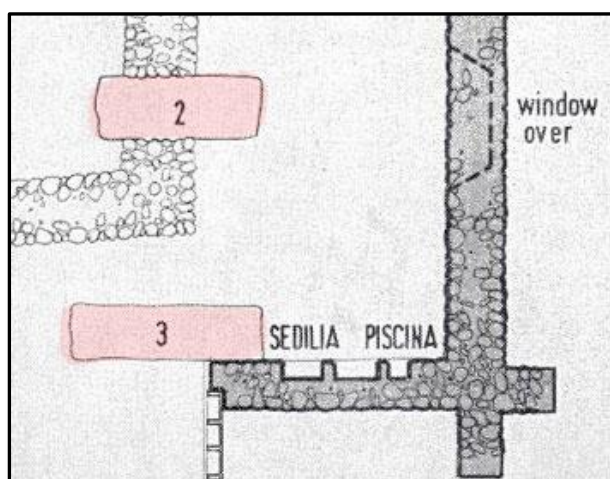
As I pressed on with my research I discovered that, in 1968, Mike Leonard and George Davies of the Council for Kent Archaeology had taken a very close look at this site and discovered that the existing church (which they dated as early C14) had been built over the foundations of an earlier church for which they suggested a date of C11.

Such a find is of course no more than we would expect when we are dealing with churches dedicated to Saint Botolph.

It leads one to take the hypothesis further and consider whether the C11 stone foundations might in turn have been built on the site of a C7 wooden field chapel.



To the left of these is the piscina - although it hardly deserves its name since there is no sign of a sacarium (drain).



Of the six groups of graves that the archaeologists discovered, the ones coloured blue and pink (in the upper diagram) are thought to be C14-15, the yellow one is likely to be C12 (and associated with the earlier church) and the green one pre-dates the early foundations so is perhaps C9.



On each side the lower stones have been hollowed out and a small (metallic?) bar has been added. The purpose of this is unknown.



Here the original shape and size of the eastern gable can be seen before the extra levels of stones were added. The east window has been converted into a doorway.



There are some magnificent timbers spanning the walls.

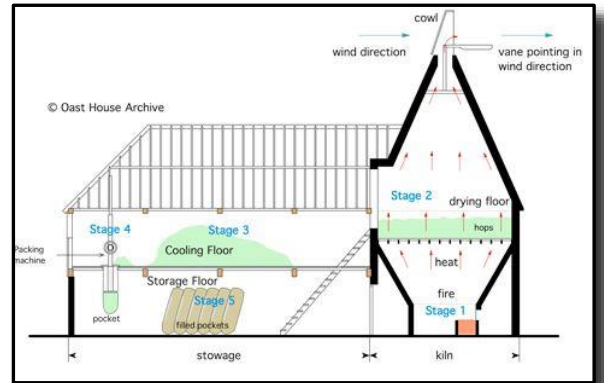


Returning outside we see the remains of a brick-built cylindrical structure at the building's north-east corner.

This proved to be an oast kiln built, according to British Listed Buildings, in early C19. If this is so then it is strange that it does not show on the 1870 O.S. map. It seems more likely to have been built between 1890 and 1910.



At the base of the kiln there are a series of holes to provide air for burning the charcoal.



The diagram above shows the general arrangement of facilities in an oast kiln. Brimstone (sulphur in rolls) was thrown onto the charcoal once it was well-alight. The sulphur lightened the colour of the crops and helped to prevent them from going mouldy.

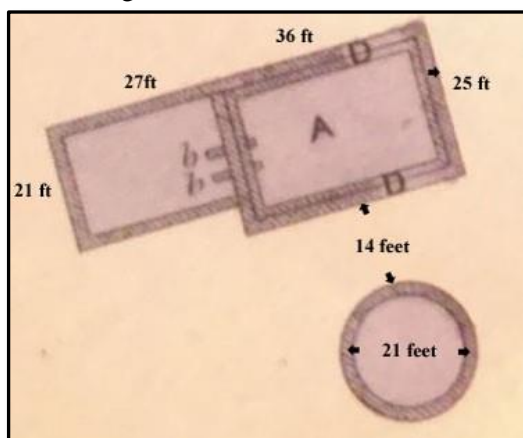


This would have been the appearance of the kiln in its heyday. Hops were first introduced into England in mid C16. The purpose of the kilns was to dry the crop. In the lower part of the oast there was a wood or charcoal fire and above this was the drying floor where freshly picked hops were spread out to dry in the gentle hot draught before they were raked out and taken to the cooling floor. Once cool they were bagged (into *pockets*) and sent to the brewers. The purpose of the hops was to preserve and add flavour to the beer.

Barns were originally used for the kilning process but by C18 square oast houses were being built especially for the task. The design was further modified in about 1800 when the 12-18ft diameter roundel kilns started to prevail. The outside diameter of the Ruxley oast is 20 ft.



This watercolour painted by H. Petrie in 1809 shows no sign of the kiln.



Interestingly the underground foundations of St Botolph's Chapel at Folkestone (seen above) are also accompanied by the remains of a cylindrical building. This could also prove to be an oast kiln since it has the right dimensions. Until now the various options that have been considered have been a bell-tower, a windmill and a lighthouse,

Thanks

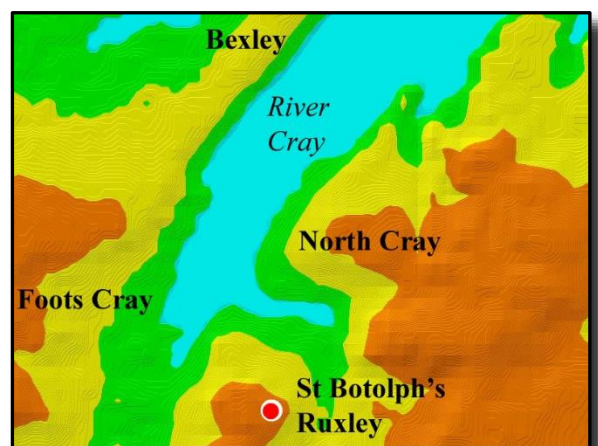
My grateful thanks to David Baker for opening the church for me, showing me round and telling me some interesting anecdotes. One of these concerned an attempt in the time of James I to start a silkworm farm at Ruxley but this failed due to the wrong type of Mulberry Tree being planted. Silkworms apparently like white mulberries rather than blue ones. A large Mulberry tree dating to back to early C17 lies just to the right of the Manor House. Down the road at Lullingstone (where incidentally there is another St Botolph's church) they obviously chose the correct type of tree because a very successful silkworm farm flourished there.

My thanks also to James Evans, the owner of Ruxley Manor Garden Centre, for arranging for me to see inside the church.

Comments

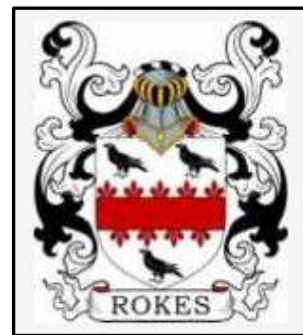
The 1086 Domesday Record would have us believe that in spite of the fact that Ruxley was the larger settlement it had no church whereas North Cray did. It is a moot point whether the reference to the North Cray church might or might not actually have been the church at Ruxley.

In 1553 following the death of Edward VI, Mary I took the throne and her father's old adversary Cardinal Reginal Pole was recalled from his exile on the Continent. In 1556 he was created Archbishop of Canterbury and the following year he deconsecrated Ruxley Church and united the Ruxley parish with that of North Cray. This makes him sound a villain but the deconsecration came about as a result of a petition by Ruxley's parishioners who by that time numbered only ten. North Cray, on the other hand, had become a very fashionable place to live and the banks of the River Cray came to be lined with large houses and ornamental gardens. As so often seems to happen the smaller village grew and gobbled up the declining larger village.



The picture above shows us the sort of topography that Botolph might have witnessed here in C7. By C18 the river would have become considerably narrower due to silting.

The Name and Origins of the village.



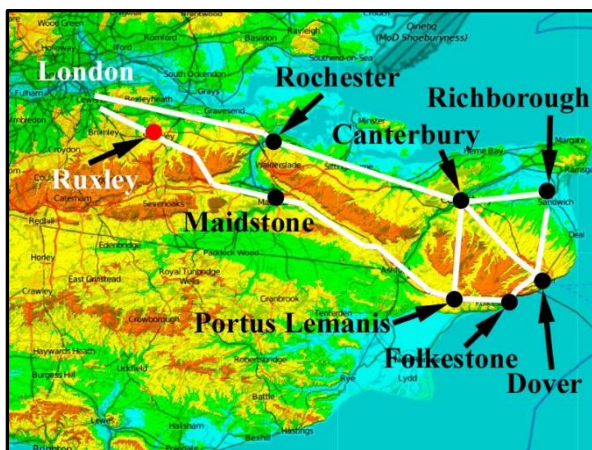
The name of Ruxley is said to be derived from a combination of the Old English words *hroc* (rook)

and *leah* (clearing) - hence 'a clearing frequented by rooks.'

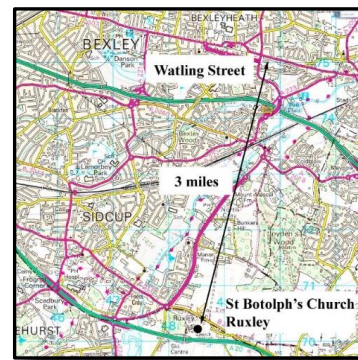
After the Norman Conquest the demesne was given to Duke William's brother Bishop Odo of Bayeux who rented it out to a Norman knight by the name of Malgerius who subsequently took *de Rokesle* as his family name. It is said that one of Malgerius' duties was to join seven other knights to guard Dover Castle for 21 days each year and that this is perpetuated by one of the castle gates being known as Ruxley Gate. I have so far been unable to verify this.

By the reign of Richard I (1189-1199) both North Cray Manor and Ruxley Manor had come into the possession of Sir John de Rokesle. It might well have been Sir John who built the first stone church on the site. I think it is more likely however that it was his eminent descendant Sir Gregory de Rokesle who, between 1274 and 1284 was Lord Mayor of London eight times. Sir Gregory was a wealthy wool merchant & goldsmith. His terms in office are commemorated by a plaque on the wall of Lloyds Bank in Lombard Street, London. Whichever *de Rokesle* built the church we have to ask ourselves *why* they would have dedicated it to Saint Botolph.

One answer could be that the earlier church was already dedicated to our saint.



When the Romans first became established in Britain their port-base in Kent was at Richborough and it was from there that a Roman road was constructed to run along the north side of the Downs via Canterbury to London. Later they found that Dover was more favourable so a metalled track was laid from there to Canterbury. This road evolved into the A2 Watling Street connecting Dover to Canterbury, Rochester and London. Ruxley church lies just 3 miles south of this.



In early C7, 200 years after the departure of the Romans, it was Folkestone's turn to become the port of choice for a while and the ancient trackway which ran along the *south* of the Downs began to gain in prominence and use. This trackway led right past Ruxley's front door and if the church *was* founded in C7 then the presence of this road would probably have been more influential in the choice of site than the Roman road to the north.

Classification

Bearing in mind that Ruxley is part of a *cluster* of Botolph Churches and bearing in mind the likelihood that this church had Saxon foundations, one is inclined to the view that the original site of Christian worship here might have been developed by Botolph himself and therefore merit an A(ii) classification.



Wool has however reared its head again in the shape of Sir Gregory de Rokesle - wool farmer and 8 times Lord Mayor of London. Sir Gregory would have been very familiar with the four St Botolph's churches in London - the nearest of which would have been only 12 miles away at Billingsgate. He would also have been in close contact with the Hanseatic League of continental traders of whom Botolph was patron saint in all but name. (See earlier issues of *The Botolphian* - particularly December 2016).

I would therefore give Ruxley a C classification because I believe that Sir Gregory, with his Hanseatic connections, was probably the builder of the church we see today. I would not however rule out the possibility that, coincidentally, Botolph might have been here first.

Timeline

c.650 *Did* Botolph build a wooden field chapel here?

c.980 First stone church built?

c.1080 Malgerius becomes lord of the manor under Bishop Odo of Bayeux & subsequently takes *de Rokesle* as his family name.

c.1195 Sir John de Rokesle accompanies Richard I to Palestine.

1274 to 1284. Sir Gregory de Rokesle Lord Mayor of London eight times.

c.1280 Present stone church built.

c.1300 North Cray worth £7, Ruxley worth £5.

1557 Church in ruinous state. No priest available. North Cray worth £10, Ruxley worth £7. Only 10 parishioners - who petition for the parish to be merged with North Cray. Cardinal Pole agrees and deconsecrates the church

1560 Records show that the building was being used as a barn

1650 Records again show that the building was being used as a barn

c.1650 Current Ruxley Manor House built.

1790 *Hasted* painting. Wood-filled N windows. Different central abutment. Barn or stable door in north wall.

1809 *Petrie* Watercolour - no N windows & no north central abutment

c.1880 - c.1910 Oast Kiln built and church building used for drying hops until about 1950. Building subsequently employed at various times as a chicken house, stable and machine shop. Records show that a donkey engine had to be removed before the archaeological dig could begin.

c.1950 - c.1970 derelict.

1968 Archaeological dig

c.1970 - c.2007 Storehouse for Ruxley Manor Garden Centre. (Derelict in 1991 according to British Listed Buildings).

2007 Repairs under the auspices of English Heritage including new roof and replacement cement window frames.

2007 - 2018 Storehouse for Ruxley Manor Garden Centre.

Correspondence

1. Patricia Croxton-Smith wrote to tell me that St Botolph's Hadstock has now reopened after some renovations but more work will be necessary in April/May.

2. Paul Kemsley wrote to point out that there is yet another Longstowe on the A1198 Royston to Huntingdon Road (The Old North Road) a couple of miles south of the crossing with the A428 at Caxton Gibbet. Thank you Paul - I will add that to the Stowe Longa melting pot.

3. Kathleen Tyson wrote asking me for a map of all known St Botolph churches - which I was happy to provide. She has a new theory about sb placements which she is looking into.

I think that is all - I hope I have not missed anyone.

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 END-NOTES

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.

- (i) Founded by radiation from Botolph centres.
- (ii) Founded along the course of Botolph's journeys.

B: **Travellers' churches.**

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

C: **Hanseatic churches** founded as a result of commercial enterprise.

D: None of the above.

Typical Characteristics of Early St Botolph Churches.

1. Nearly 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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