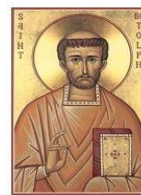




The Botolphian

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: **2020 – the 1400th anniversary (circa) of St Botolph's birth.** 1st March 2020

Highlights this month

- **Church of St Botolph's Barton Seagrave, Northamptonshire**
- It gives me great pleasure to welcome Pam Petley from Stamford North in Kent as a new member.
- Correspondence from Graham Jones, Tim Monsour, Marcia Barton and Revd Paul Wilkinson.

Editorial

Barton Seagrave was first featured in these pages in June 2013 when it was the fourth St Botolph's church that I researched. At that stage I was very much feeling my way – and continued to do so for at least the next eight months. I hope that I have done the church better justice this time.

This year they celebrate their 900th anniversary and during 2020 there will be a series of special activities and events under the title of *Festival 900+*. On April 26th there will be a Civic Service plus ceremonial switching on of the new floodlighting;

In May there will be a Festival of Music with events held in the church on 8th, 9th, 13th, 15th, 16th, 20th. Between 2nd and 4th May there will be Guided History Tours of the church. 23-25th will see a Flower Festival and an Art Exhibition by local artists together with an Historical Documents Exhibition and full time Coffee Shop.

On Saturday 13th June there will be further Guided History Tours of the church and on **St Botolph's Day 17th June** there will be a special peal of the church bells.

Contact admin@stbots.church or 01536 414-052 for further details and tickets.

Church Feature

Barton Seagrave, Northants



Approach: *Heading south-east from Kettering down the London Road, bear left along Barton Road and pass the Tresham Institute on your left. The road dips down and crosses the remnants of the River Ise before rising again when you will find Vine's Restaurant (Barton Seagrave Hall) on your left where you turn right into St. Botolph's Road and then immediately turn left into the crescent which lies in front of the church.*

Location: 52.3844, -0.6966, NN15 6SR.

Key: *The church is normally kept locked. For access go to Church House (the old rectory) to the right of the church. There is an intercom which is manned Mon - Thurs 9 am-1 pm. Best to telephone them on 01536 414-052 in advance.*

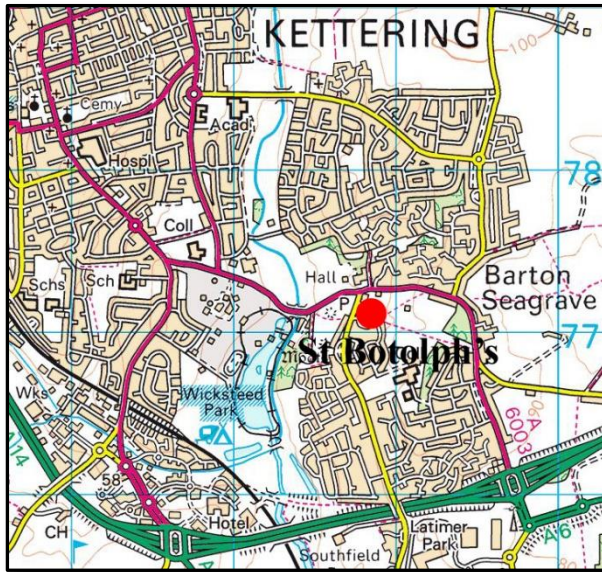
Contacts: *The Rectory, St. Botolph's Road, Kettering NN15 6SR Tel: 01536 513-629 or 414-052*

Rector: *Revd Mark Lucas*

Website: <https://www.stbots.org.uk/>

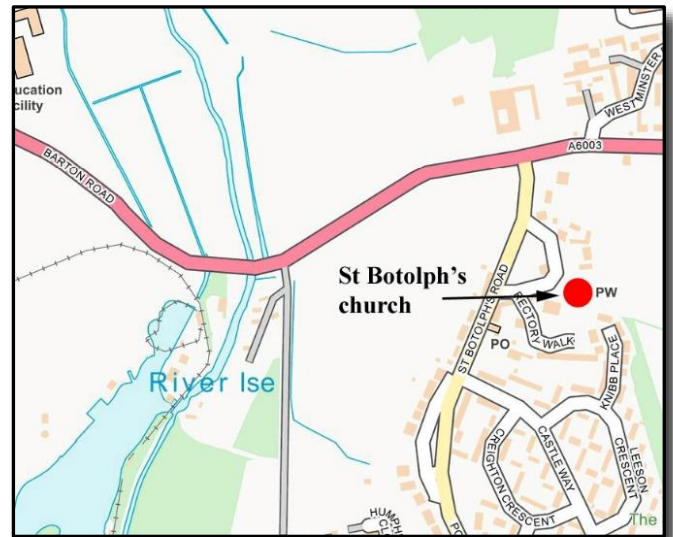
Church Services: *Every Sunday at 9.15am, 11.00am and 6.30pm.*

Listed Grade: **I.**



Origin of the village's name.

The second half of the village's name came from Baron Nicholas de Segrave (c.1238-1295) who was prominent during the reign of King Henry III and who built the now-ruined castle that bears his name. 'Barton' is said to derive from 'barley farm'.



Foundation of the site

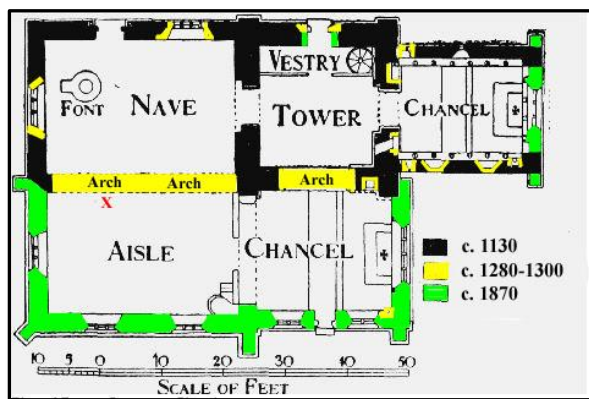
The church is tucked away off the main road and on a crescent. The first record of a church on this site was in a charter dated c.1120 when Geoffrey de Clinton donated the building to the Monastery of Kenilworth. It consisted of a nave, central tower and chancel. Massive restoration works were completed in c.1878 when the old nave became the North aisle and a new South aisle (now the main nave) was added together with a new chancel. Further restoration work was undertaken in 1987.



The first thing that struck me about the church was how ‘chunky’ it was – which is of course typical of Norman design. The photograph above shows several important features. The brown colour of the stonework in the upper part of the nave and the tower are due to the fact that different stone was used when raising the heights of the walls. The pointed Gothic style of the top windows in the tower confirm that this part was a later build. The earlier (rounded) Norman window in the centre of the tower tells us, on the other hand, that the original tower achieved at least this height. The two large pointed windows are clearly later insertions.



In Cyclopic style the north wall of the nave bears just the one genuine C12 Norman window of which half was filled in at the same time that the large C13 Early English Gothic window was installed.



The ground plan shows that the building derives from two distinct eras six or seven centuries apart.

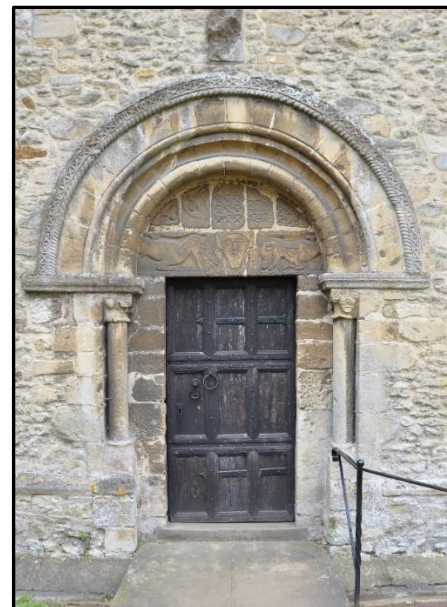


Yet the Norman window would not have been so central before the height of the north wall was increased to accommodate the clerestory with its 4 ‘triangular’ windows.



This has been cunningly camouflaged by the western face presenting the unwary ecclesiologist with two similar Early English style windows but the wall on the left dates from C12 and that on the right from C19.

Indeed, when looking at the outside of the church we should perhaps half close our eyes and concentrate on the fact that the original structure is the Norman half on the north side. Thus, the main access today is via the north door which leads into the C12 nave. From this point, since there are potentially two chancels and two naves, I will be referring to each as C12 or C19.



The Norman doorway is solid and spectacular and has four features that are worthy of note. We shall cover these working our way clockwise around the door.



First of course, the glorious tympanum the carvings of which look crude enough to be earlier than Norman. The two blocks on the top left bear carvings of goats. The remaining three blocks in this top row are carved rather more simply in chip-saltire patterns. This immediately raises the suspicions that either the sculptor ran out of ideas, or that originally there were carvings on all five blocks but three were damaged or lost and replaced by the 'saltired' ones. The inappropriate colour of the mortar also suggests that some meddling has gone on here. It seems to me that the most likely way that the original blocks might have been lost is if this doorway was once built in a different location (on the *south* side of the church perhaps?) and then moved to the north some years later, the missing blocks having been stolen in the period between dismantling and reconstructing.



At first sight the lower row looks complete. The 'beast' on the left-hand side has been recorded as a stylised lion (based on the unreliable fact that it has a mane). There is an object in its jaws which, appears to be a human head.



On the right-hand side lurks another happier looking 'lion.'



Between the two is a face, variously ascribed to Christ or Daniel (the latter being on account of the lions).



Tympana are not very common but there is a famous one only 10 miles to the southeast of Barton Seagrave at Pitsford although this depicts a slightly different subject, whereas . . .



. . . here at St Michael's church at Moccas in Herefordshire we have another two beasts devouring two unfortunate sinners who are clinging on to the tree of life in the hope of salvation.



And above at the church of Saints Peter and Paul at Dinton in Buckinghamshire we have two more lion-like animals both of which resemble the beasts at Barton Seagrave in that they have 'head-

like objects' in their mouths. In this case however the 'heads' are attached to another depiction of the tree of life.

The late Mary Curtis Webb specialised in C12 sculpture and she writes: *'The monsters on the Dinton Tympanum are Tempters. Their mouths are toothless because man has not, as yet, succumbed to his temptations.'*

The mouths of the 'lions' on our Barton Seagrave tympanum are similarly edentulous. Another aspect that might be noted from this series of tympana is that they all seem to exhibit a more sophisticated style of carving than the tympanum at Barton Seagrave and yet all are thought to date from C12. The tree of life is notably (and unusually) absent from the Barton Seagrave tympanum. One wonders if it might have featured on one of the spaces now occupied by the saltired blocks adjacent to the goats? It is beginning to look as if we only have half the story here.



Another nail in the coffin of completeness is that the rear ends of both beasts (I am reluctant to call them lions) have vanished behind the archway leaving just the hind paw of the western beast (lower arrow) and a curious girdle (upper arrow) as evidence that when they were first carved, a larger proportion of their bodies was destined for display.



The capitals at the tops of the columns on each side of the door bear a couple of faces . . .



. . . and on the opposite side, something rather less discernible.



Next to the door handle is an unpretentious Sanctuary Knocker.



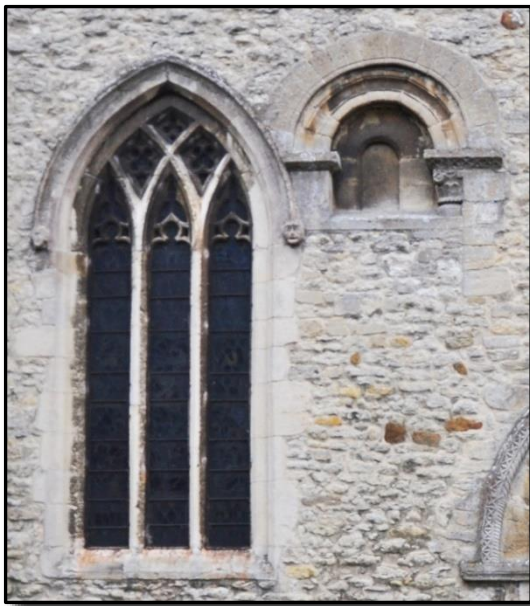
The triangular windows in the clerestory are a most unusual feature. They were added when the roof was raised in C13. The upper stonework is slightly different to that lower down.



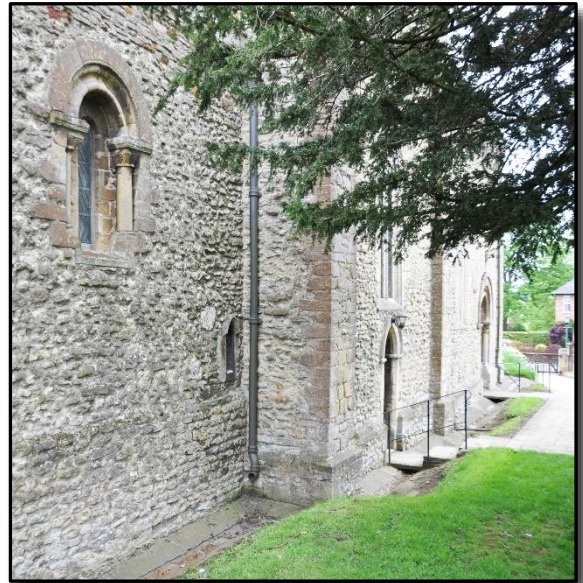
The light itself is a trefoil.



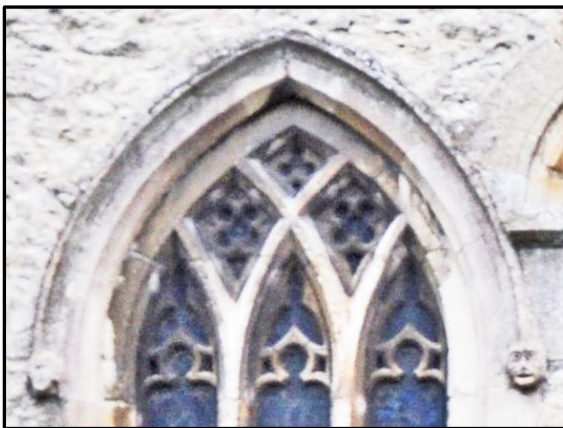
The C12 nave abuts a massive tower which again abuts the old C12 chancel. Central towers are notoriously perfidious but this one has stood the test of time.



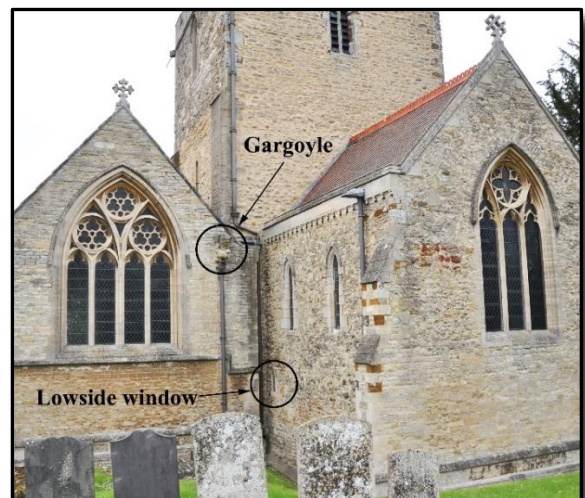
Below them the Early English and Norman windows merge at their corners.



Here we see a second doorway leading into the tower and then the north wall of the C12 chancel with a lowside window just east of the drainpipe and then a higher C12 round-topped original Norman window.



This window is unusual in its mixture of trefoils and quatrefoils in the upper elements which in many C13 windows are left empty. It is not clear if these have been added for strength, decoration, or to satisfy the mason's lust for foils of all varieties.



Coming around the east side of the building to where C12 merges with C19 we find two lancet

windows inserted in the south wall of the old chancel in C13. . .



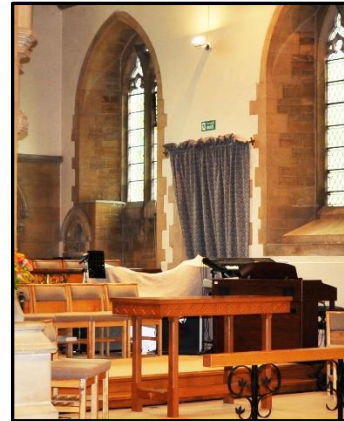
. . . and another C13 lowside window on the C12 chancel's southern wall.



There is an interesting but weather-worn gargoyle on the eastern wall of the C19 chancel.

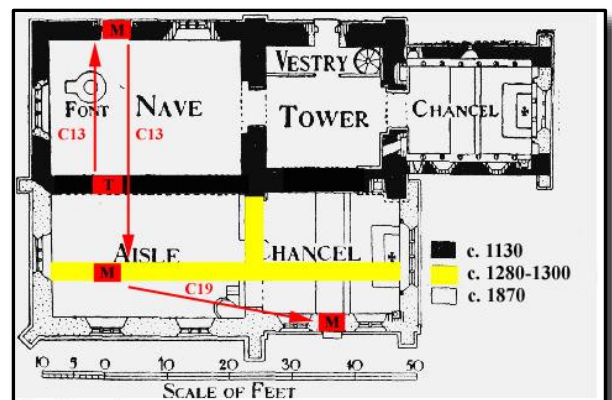


Working our way down the southern aspect of the composite building there is a 'priests' door' at a central point of the new chancel and on its jambs are the scratchings and gnomon hole of a Mass Dial.



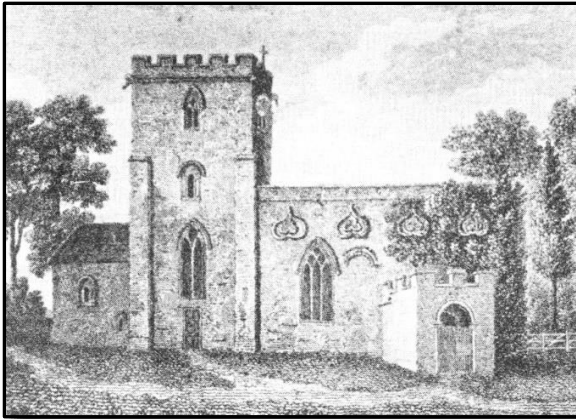
The door (a curtain covers here) opens just to the west of the altar rails. Mass Dials are a mediaeval (1100-1600) feature and this doorway is in a wall which was built in C19 so we can be certain that it has been recycled – but from where? It was clearly somewhere on the south wall previously because Mass Dials cannot function without sun. It seems likely that it was originally positioned close to the point marked with a red 'X' in the ground plan shown on page 3.

It has however been suggested that the celebrated north door with its tympanum might have started its life in the *south* wall. This is logical because north doorways are traditionally regarded as being the emergency exit for the Devil when he is cast out of a person's soul during baptism. Conversely the south doorway (all other things being equal) is usually the entry door and would therefore be the most magnificent. If you subscribe to this theory (and I do), then the south doorway with the Mass Dial might well have been the original north door and acquired its dial scratchings after it was moved.



Referring to the ground plan above my theory is that 'T' (the tympanum doorway) started its life in

the Norman south wall and then, in C13 when the Norman south wall was demolished and replaced by arches, 'T' was moved north to become the main entrance and 'M' (the original north doorway which would later acquire a Mass dial) moved and placed in the south wall of the C13 new south aisle. If it did indeed acquire the Mass Dial after that date then it suggests that this south door was routinely used during much of that time; I say this on the basis that the Dial is a message for potential communicants regarding the time of the next Mass and that would not work well unless the communicants regularly passed this way.



This 1817 picture of the church shows that a porch had been constructed by that date so it rather looks as if by that time it was the north door that was being used as the main entrance. Soon after this picture, in 1878 or thereabouts, the south wall was demolished - thus liberating 'M' which, it would appear, was then reinstated as a 'priests' door' leading into the C19 chancel.

I stress that these are my personal interpretations of events and I look forward to receiving alternative arguments.



This view, showing the west end of the C12 nave on the left and the C19 nave on the right also shows scarring above the northern buildings window where an alien batch of ironstone was used to raise the height of the walls when the clerestory was added.



A boar (?) gargoyle at the junction of the two parts of the building.



Entering the church through the north door we are greeted by a comfortable ambiance.



The font stands at the west end of the C12 nave.



It also is said to date from C12 and bears four grooves which show where the cover was locked in place. Repairs can be seen where Cromwell's soldiers caused damage when they ripped the cover off in the hope of finding hidden valuables.



Gone are the pews and in their place are neatly arranged comfortable chairs. Today's nave embraces both the C12 and the C19 naves and, due to the L-shaped viewing area that this creates, an audio-visual system is in place to ensure that nobody misses anything.



Raising our eyes we can see between the arches in the midst of what is today a curtain wall, the remains of a Norman window.



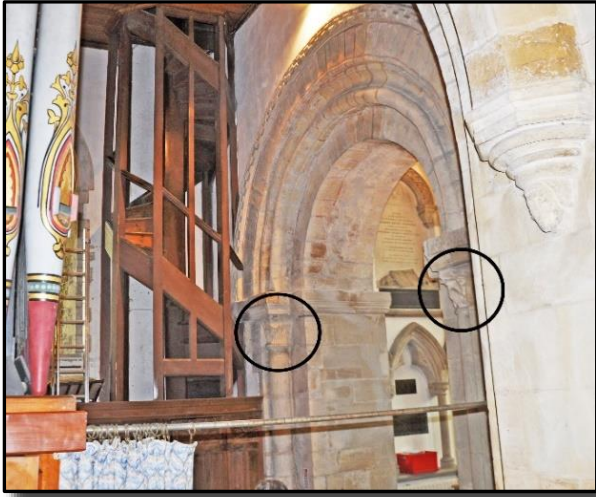
So here we are in the C12 nave looking eastwards and this is the wonderful Norman western doorway of the tower.



Detail of the tower's western doorway.



Looking upwards reveals a filled-in round-headed tower window which, before the roof was raised, used to be exposed to the elements.



Entering the tower, we have on our left the vestry, boiler room and spiral staircase up to the belfry and on our right the church organ. As we approach the tower's eastern doorway there are two columns topped with capitals . . .



. . . one of scrolls and the other depicting birds



Immediately to the right of the doorway, set in the wall, is a squint through which an observer has a view of the altar in the C12 chancel.



The chancel has C12 arcading which has been wonderfully preserved due to the fact that it had remained covered for many years until C19 when it was rediscovered during building work.



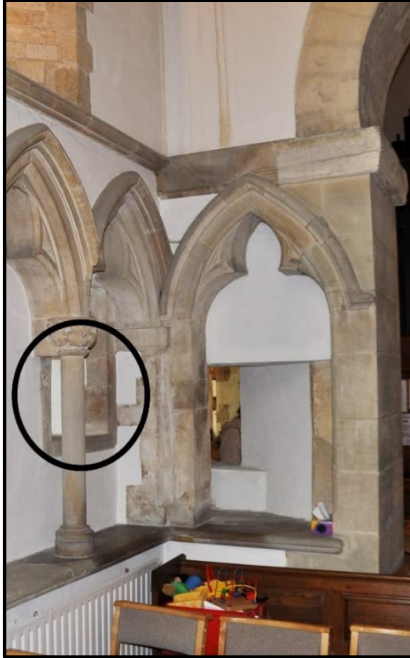
As we entered the chancel we passed, immediately on our left, the opening of the lowside window that we had earlier noted on the north wall.



Affixed a little further along the wall we find this 1616 memorial plaque to Jane Floyde wife of Rector Hugh Floyde:

Here was she borne and bred

*Here was she married
This brass can say no more than this
Bar-towne witnesses can
Haw good to poore she was
How meeke a Christian
Both when she lived and died
She was the Lord's.
She had what earth,
She has what heaven affords.*



As we prepare to leave the C12 chancel, we pass the south lowside window (ringed) – which lies adjacent to the opening of the squint. Going through the archway into the tower and then turning left, we pass the other end of the squint before entering the C19 chancel in the direction of the red arrow shown in the picture below.

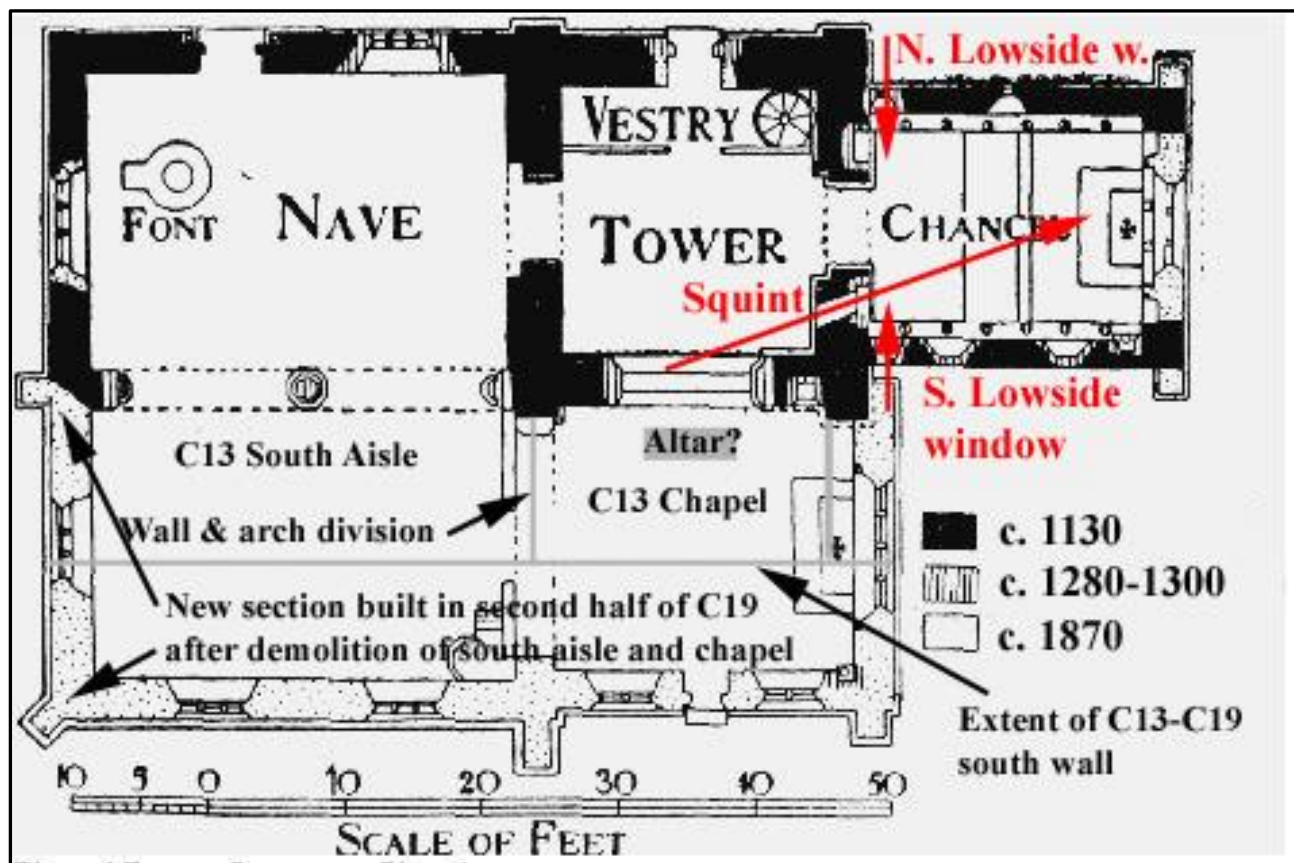


This is where things start to get a little confusing because the *History of the County of Northampton: Volume 3*. (Originally published by Victoria County History, London, 1930) tells us:

“There are remains of a rood-loft stair in the tower wall at the north-east corner of the chapel (aka the C19 chancel)” Footnote 80 observes that *in its original form the chapel was divided from the aisle by a wall and arch. The piscina belonged to the chapel altar.*



The piscina is seen here at the south east corner of the C19 chancel. It seems that between C13 and C19, in part of the position now occupied by this chancel and the C19 nave, there stood a chapel and a south aisle, the two (as recorded above) being divided by a wall and arch.

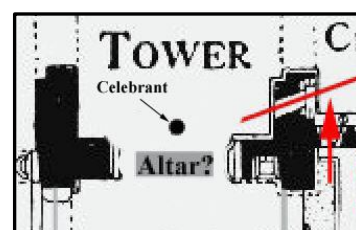


The evidence suggests that the situation was as shown above. However, the line of view through the squint indicates that the person in the chapel celebrating mass would have to have stood under the south archway of the tower in order to have seen the host being elevated in the C12 chancel. In such circumstances the chapel altar would have been located just to the south of him.

This looks very untidy and surely cannot be correct. One would have expected the chapel altar to have been on the east wall of the chapel – but if that had been so the celebrant would not have been able to see the squint at all.



There are several other alternatives. One is that the altar was located just inside the tower with the celebrant standing close to the south archway.



Another is that the altar was placed under the tower arch.

We know that the three wide Gothic arches (two in the nave and one in the south wall of the tower) were installed contemporaneously with the south aisle being added in c.1280, so it looks as if massive widening of the archway in the south wall of the tower must have been carried out at the same time.



The other possibility is that I was correct in the first place – that the altar was placed at the east end of the chapel in c. 1300, and that it was

perhaps not the celebrant but a server with a handbell whose job it was to look through the squint. When the server of the main altar saw that the celebrant was about to elevate the host, he rang his bell and this action was seen or heard via the squint by the server of the chapel altar who likewise rang his bell thus synchronising both celebrants and the congregation.

This, to me, seems the most likely answer to this question particularly bearing in mind the presence of the north and south lowside windows at the junction of the chancel and tower (indicated by the two smaller red arrows on the large ground plan above).

I am continually honing my ideas about the function of lowside windows. I have often heard authorities state “We simply do not know what they were for.” This of course is not good enough for me and as things stand at the moment my research indicates:

1. That all lowside windows were installed and used only in the years between 1225 and 1350.
2. That their purpose approximated to the function of the squint: i.e. to communicate the instant of the elevation of the host to congregations (in this case those *outside* the church). This would have been particularly necessary on festival days when there was insufficient space within the building and the overspill gathered outside and clustered around the chancel.
3. It seems likely that an observer was positioned outside the church adjacent to each of the open lowside windows so that as soon as he heard the sacring¹ bell from within, he would ring his handbell and thus alert the worshipping hordes.

I remember reading somewhere that during the 1225-1350 period, edicts were issued by the Pope that bells should be rung at this part of the rite. Sadly, my research has yet to identify these edicts so for the moment this information has been consigned to the *rumour file*.

During the period 1208 to 1214 Pope Innocent III had placed England under an interdict due to King John's refusal to accept Stephen Langton as Archbishop of Canterbury. As punishment the pope forbade the public celebration of sacred rites. The relevance of this to lowside windows is that once the interdict was lifted, it would not be surprising if there were renewed enthusiasm for what had been denied previously - with the result that little churches became full to overflowing.

¹ The Sacring bell is alternatively referred to as Sanctus bell, Mass bell, Sacryn bell, Sance bell or Saints' bell.

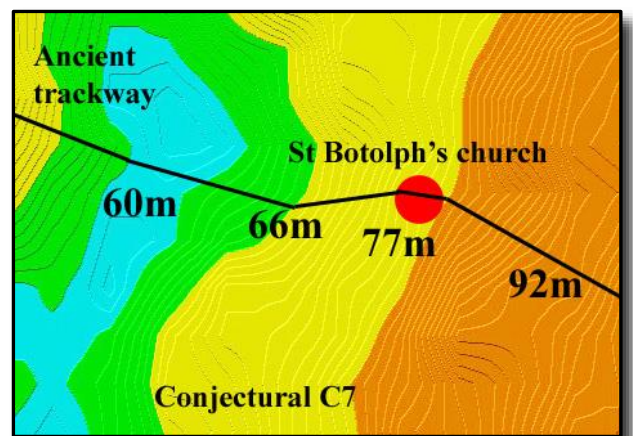
[Ed: I would be pleased to hear of any alternative solutions to *The Mystery of the Lowside Windows*].

Classification?

Although the church satisfies all the usual signs of a classical St Botolph's church, the distance from it to the nearest Roman road is 6 miles – more than double the usual distance.



Nearby Kettering however was an unwall'd Romano-British settlement. The remnants of this lie only 2 miles away under the northern part of the town. The whole area was a centre for iron smelting and pottery production. Indeed, pottery kilns have been unearthed at Barton Seagrave itself.



The church stands nicely clear of the River Ise. Our next question is *Why was the church dedicated to Saint Botolph?* The answer is that it was not – not all the time anyway. It was at one stage of its life dedicated to St John – and it is not even clear if the John in question was St John the Baptist or St John the beloved disciple. Anne Pegg's booklet tells us that references to its St John's name are found in *wills of c. 1200 and 1527*. *St Botolph is first recorded c.1720*. It is suggested that the St John influence might have originated from the presence of the Knights Templars at the nearby baronial Seagrave Hall.

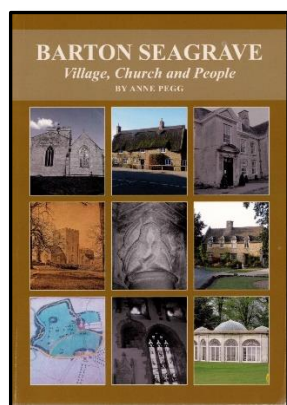
The church is at a river crossing which is a classical site for a St Botolph's church. There are veiled suggestions in the literature that a Saxon church might have preceded this one.

I am unsure how I feel about this church. Was it founded in 1120 from scratch or did it have a Saxon predecessor – built perhaps in mid C10 and dedicated to St Botolph? Its remoteness from a Roman road is out of character but it is still on a travellers' route – both via the River Isle (which connects with the River Nene at Irchester) and the ancient east-west trackways.

This would make its classification B(iii) – a Travellers' church founded after the Norman Conquest.

Thanks

My grateful thanks to Anne Pegg who has valiantly put up with several telephone calls and other requests from me this week.



I found Anne's book (shown above) a great deal of help when preparing this feature. Copies are available from her at 5 Southfield Drive, Barton Seagrave, NN15 5YQ. Telephone 01536 671-891. The cost is £10 if collected or £12 including p&p.

Correspondence

1. Graham Jones: Forgive me for delaying this fuller reply. I wanted to write having looked at the later, and equally impressive maps and deeds at Chippenham.

Congratulations again on your recovery of St B's chapel at Folkestone. This is a case where it's very likely that the site was in use in B's lifetime and known to him.

My guess is that the chapel possessed a relic of the saint (possibly an image deemed miraculous, if not a bone or artefact, conceivably from Cnut when he confirmed the gift of Folkestone to the church of Canterbury) and that this attracted local pilgrimage and burials. It would also explain its disappearance if destroyed by the same iconoclasts who 'plucked down' the chapel of St Eanswith in 1546/7.

More than that, St B's chapel may have been a place of assembly (perhaps a fairground?). This is one interpretation of the town's 'reward' of Henry VIII's minstrels in 1544/5 for playing 'befor seynt Botholppe'. Its location in Little Botolphs field [not Great Botolphs, I think, Denis; I can share my mapping of the site if it helps], known later as Round Close, at the head of a valley might suggest a sort of natural amphitheatre, and Folly Lane, which gives access to Little Botolphs, may be older than Dover Road, the 'old Dover Road' out of Folkestone being further to the west.

The Romano-British building makes the site nationally important, and for our purposes its inclusion in the Folkestone Priory estate (the Earl of Radnor's family inherited the priory lands together with the lordship and manor of Folkestone to which the estate was rejoined at the Reformation) allows us to posit a personal connection with St B. To Folkestone's share of cross-Channel traffic can be added Eanswith's nunnery and the possibility that St B may have been consulted about its affairs as he was rather later at another house with Kentish royal family connections, Wenlock.

Though a text not without its flaws, Folcard's Life of St B tells how at Faremoutiers-en-Brie he met Æthelburh and Saethryth, nieces of his patron king Æthelhere of East Anglia who were studying there. Through them St B may have been recommended to their brother-in-law Eadbald, founder of Folkestone's nunnery for his daughter Eanswith.

But you're better qualified than me in the matter of B's chronology, Denis. Over to you!

All the best, Graham.

Thanks very much for that Graham – I will pursue the points you make.

2. Tim Monsour wrote amusingly from Florida: Overrule all you like but I can state, with complete confidence, that there are in fact many, many "Buttholes" in America (as you seem to know) and they are real. I even lived next to one for years. I suspect some Buttholes have made it over to England too. Maybe check the nearest pub.....

Enjoyed the issue and had a great laugh at the Butthole conundrum!

Hope all is well with everyone. Please say hello to all. Cheers! Tim.

3. Marcia Barton wrote (last month) from Chevening in Kent: Many congratulations on producing such a splendid copy of The Botolphian to welcome in the New Year and to celebrate the 1400th birthday of St Botolph!

I had not heard of the church at Hardham before. What an absolute gem! I certainly intend to visit it.

I congratulate Rev. William Howard on his 30 years as rector at Grimston - but I shall have to

take up his challenge. At St Botolph's, Chevening, Kent, we have had three rectors who served 35 years each: one in the 16th century; one in the 19th; and more recently Rev Maurice Hewett served from 1960 to 1995.

Marcia Barton (Churchwarden St Botolph's, Chevening)

3. Revd Paul Wilkinson wrote (last month) from Newbold-on-Avon:

Dear Denis; A very happy new year to you and all readers of the Botolphian.

I note that William Howard was Rector of St Botolph at Grimston for 30 years and you wonder whether anyone can beat that record. Now that we enter 2020, I am heading for my 30th anniversary as Vicar of St Botolph, Newbold-on-Avon. 6th June 2020 will be the 30th anniversary of my licensing here and, as retirement is still a year or two away, I hope(!) to exceed 30 years by a little while.

Many thanks for all your hard work in keeping us all informed of the world of St Botolph and his churches.

With all good wishes. Paul.

[Ed: Many thanks to Marcia and Paul – sorry that I missed your replies out last month . . . and many congratulations to you Paul for achieving (soon) your 30th and best wishes for many more happy years at Newbold-on-Avon. Back to you then William.].

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 within 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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