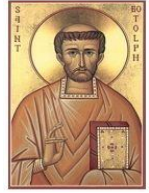




The Botolphian

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 778-778. Email: dp@botolph.info
President: Revd Timothy L'Estrange, Vicar of St.Gabriel's Church, North Acton.

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Highlights this month

- **Lindisfarne and Botolphian connections.**

Editorial

SOSB Luncheon 18th October 2023.

12.30 for 1 p.m. at the Hilton City Centre Hotel – two course luncheon £39 per head. **We are very low on numbers for this event so please consider supporting it. Please telephone me on 07802 646-644 if you can join us.**

-0-

This month's feature comes to you as a result of a week's tour Zina and I took in August with a view to attending the Edinburgh Tattoo, visiting my Scottish family, and calling in to see my old sailing friend Ray Theakston who lives in Yorkshire. He lives not far from Saint Botolph's Church, Bossall so a Botolphian connection to the tour was clearly inevitable.

In the August issue of *The Botolphian* (No. 101, Iona Abbey), I covered Botolph's activities and associations in the *west* of Scotland, and in a previous issue (December 2020 No. 91, St Andrews) I had covered much of the *eastern* part of the country. I was disappointed however to have had to rely on Messrs Google and Wikipedia etc to provide many of the pictures, so August's visit gave me the opportunity of catching up in the photography department.

The drive to York and thence to Oban (where my family live) was ... wet, but once we were in Scotland the weather was kind to us and remained benevolent for the whole week.

Our tour proved very profitable from the Botolphian research point of view and in later issues I intend to elaborate further on the presence of his cult in eastern Scotland, but for the moment

this issue concentrates on the English county of Northumberland.

Feature

Lindisfarne

and its Botolphian connections.

Lindisfarne, - otherwise known as *Holy Island* – lies just off the east coast of Northumberland six miles to the NNW of the important town of Bamburgh, offshore of which (and seven miles to the SE of Lindisfarne) are the 15 to 20 (depending upon the height of the tide) Farne Islands.

Lindisfarne was the original name for the island – the alternative name of *Holy Island* dates from C11 when Benedictine monks from Durham refounded the monastery which had fallen somewhat fallow following its desecration by the Vikings.





Toponymy

The ‘-farne’ suffix of Lindisfarne and the *Farne* Islands provides a common link. We also have the same element in England in the placename *Farnborough* where the local guess is that it refers to ferns having grown there. The same suggestion has been offered for the Farne Islands together with the arguable observation that they are ‘fern-shaped’. I am told that there are no ferns growing on the islands now and it seems unlikely that there ever were due to the islands’ fern-hostile ecology consisting of a salty atmosphere and lack of trees the shade from which is essential for ferns to thrive.

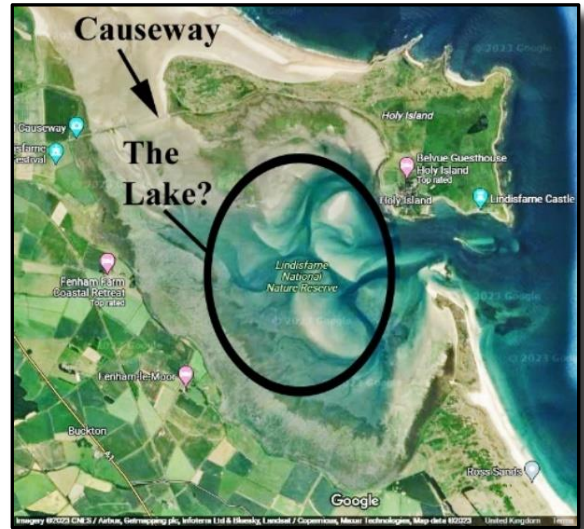
Another suggestion is that the island’s name is related to the ancient word ‘faran’ used in the sense of ‘going’, ‘passing’, ‘travelling’, ‘pilgrimage’ and in any other similar context. It is interesting to note that the theme is continued further to the north in the name of the town of Fearn which is on our itinerary in a later issue.

Fearn is also the name of the third letter in the Old Celtic/Irish Ogham Alphabet where it is now pronounced as ‘f’¹ and is indisputably linked to the Alder Tree - which grows prolifically in Scotland and is extremely resistant to being damaged by the salt coastal atmosphere.

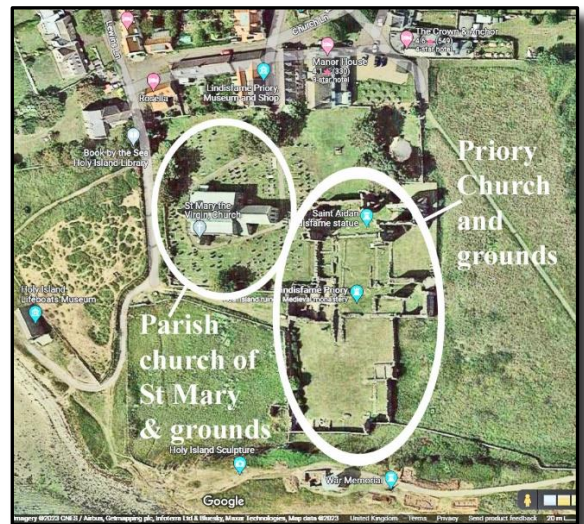
It might well be that the Alder is the missing link although of course if these trees *were* ever on the islands they would have provided the shade needed to grow ferns – so we go right round in a circle and end up having to admit defeat.

It is suggested that the ‘Lindis’ part might derive from some connection with Lindsey (Lincolnshire) or it might come from the Celtic word ‘Lin’ or ‘Lind’ meaning ‘lake’ (e.g. Dub-lin = Black Lake). And indeed on the eastern side of the island there IS a small ancient freshwater lake. It seems far more likely however that the ‘lake’ in question refers to the mass of water between the island and the mainland. i.e. ‘*Lindis-farne is the Farne Island which has a lake between it and the mainland*’.

¹ Confusingly it used to be pronounced as ‘w’.



The satellite picture above shows the island at low water; at high water the sands and central sandbanks (and the causeway) become completely covered.



The village is tiny and occupies only a small part of the island. The religious site lies to the south of the village.



Lindisfarne is a place which Zina, unbeknown to me, had wanted to visit for many years. On the day we visited the causeway was ‘crossable’

between about 2.30 p.m. and 10 p.m. so that gave us time to visit the sites and to enjoy a meal before heading back to the hotel on the mainland.

Tourists are urged to park their cars in the carpark rather than cluttering up the town which indeed is only a short walk away.

Lindisfarne Priory and the church of Saint Mary the Virgin are two closely-linked but separate ancient religious sites.

Heading towards the ancient site

It is but a short walk from the car park to the site and there are some good eating and drinking places on the way.



As you approach, the priory church is on the left and Saint Mary the Virgin's church on the right. On arrival you are greeted by a tall handsome sculpture of Saint Aidan which was created by Kathleen Parbury in 1958 and is now in need of repair and restoration for which money is urgently needed.



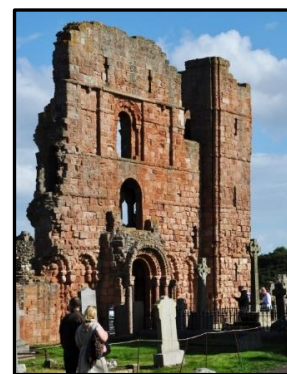
If the Scottish part of Botolph's ancestry is to be believed, and personally I am beginning to think it should be, then Botolph would undoubtedly have been well acquainted with both **King Oswald of Northumbria (reigned 633-642)** - who was about sixteen years his senior and like Botolph grew up on the fortress of Dunadd, and attended the same 'school' on Iona - and **Saint Aidan** who was a teacher at the 'school' on Iona where he was subsequently consecrated bishop,

King Oswald was a confirmed Christian and he wanted to bring the religion's influence to his territory in northern England. It was his earlier connections with Scotland that allowed him to easily do this. His first candidate was a failure but Bishop Aidan was an overwhelming success and soon settled into his work there.

Botolph would similarly have known of **Saint Cuthbert** who, after Aidan's death in 651, took over from him at Lindisfarne - just three years before Botolph himself established his abbey of Icanho in East Anglia in 654. Cuthbert was fourteen years Botolph's junior and with the population of Britain then only numbering 2 million, the world was a smaller place with fewer characters whose names nevertheless were more widely known because of this. Sadly Oswald was destined never to see the great Cuthbert in office at Lindisfarne, because the monarch was killed in 642, nine years before Cuthbert's accession. More of Saint Cuthbert later.

Lindisfarne Priory

The priory consists of a church, the administrative facilities (such as the Chapter House, Guest Rooms and stables) and living accommodation including dormitories, refectory, infirmary, kitchens etc. The Priory Church is the most imposing part of the conglomeration we see today. The picture below shows the west wall with its doorway leading directly into the nave. The construction of the church started between 1125 and 1150. The diamond and chevron patterns of the west doorway reflect its Norman provenance. The building is made from beautiful pink sandstone.





As we pass through the west doorway and head in the direction of the crossing (where the transepts cross the main aisle and where the tower would once have been) we perhaps lose our bearings slightly as we find that the usually flat chancel arch has been replaced by a high diagonally-angled rainbow-shaped structure.

To our left in the large picture above is the north aisle and ahead is the skewed *rainbow arch*. This is in fact the surviving NW-SE vaulting rib that was part of the high base of the tower before the tower collapsed taking the SW-NE rib with it.

On the far side of the arch we can see the chancel - or *presbytery* as it is called when associated with the priory. (On the basis of 'When in Rome ...' I shall continue to use the word *presbytery*).

The picture on the right of this page shows the presbytery with its missing east window glass and a semi-circular apse marked out in stone. On the south wall at the far end you will just be able to make out a piscina but this is in the later wall of the presbytery extension which dates from 1180.





We will discuss the piscina (shown on the right above) later. The picture on the left is of an aumbry situated in the north wall of the presbytery.

This priory church was built by a community at Durham which, at a similar time were busy rebuilding Durham Cathedral Priory to house the relics of *Saint Cuthbert*. Almost unbelievably these dynamic Durham people also, within the same time framework, managed to found five other cells as well as this one at Lindisfarne. The others were at Coldingham, Inner Farne, Jarrow, Finchale & Monkwearmouth.



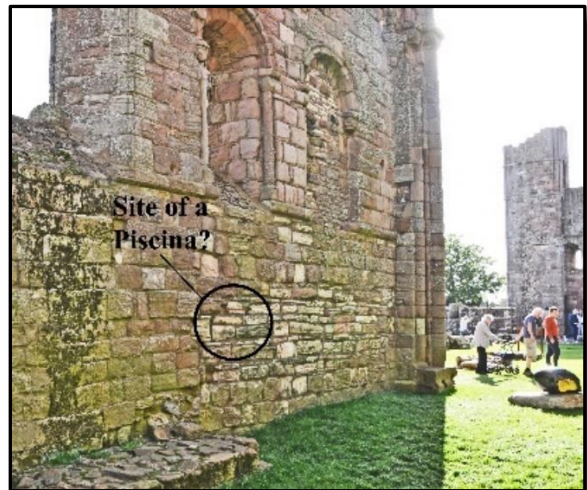
*Where Saint Botolph Churches end,
Saint Cuthbert's cult begins.
The most northerly St Botolph's church lies
close to Durham, although as we have seen,
his cult extended much further north.*

All these abbey/priory cells were built on the same site as previous Anglo-Saxon churches – hence, in Lindisfarne presbytery the stone outline almost certainly marks the semi-circular apse of the previous Anglo-Saxon church. It is not just a marking feature however since these are the foundations of the first phase of the Norman church. Within fifty years fashions and the

liturgy had changed and the presbytery was considered too short so the apse was torn down and the presbytery extended to the end wall we see now. In the new east wall there would originally have been three Early English style Gothic windows but these were removed in C14 and a Decorated Style window inserted instead.



Reverting to the subject of the piscina and the aumbry, the space left by the latter can be seen above on the north presbytery wall close to the beginning of the stone apse outline.



One would have expected to find a piscina in a similar position on the south wall, but if there ever was one in this region (and I am sure there would have been) it looks as if it was moved eastwards and recycled to become the piscina in the new presbytery when that was extended.

I would also have expected to see a Low Side Window in the presbytery close to its junction with the transept but there seems to be no evidence of one on the south wall – although something strange has occurred on the north side – where one of the columns has been shaved off and an alleyway created.

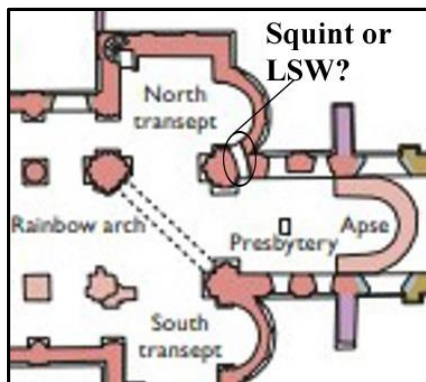
This could either be a squint so that a priest celebrating mass in the north transept could time his elevation of the host to match that of the elevations of a senior priest in the presbytery ...

or ... it could be Lindisfarne Priory's alternative to a Low Side Window.

Clearly this modification has been made at a later date (compare the column with its southerly partner in the pink-lined picture below) - and if my theory about LSWs is true:

i.e. that they were part of an indulgency ritual whereby parishioners could pay the church for a private viewing of the newly consecrated host, ... express the words "My Lord and my God", and thereby be granted seven years and forty-one days relief from purgatory as well as other extravagant favours such as security from a sudden death and protection against infection from any contagious disease² ...

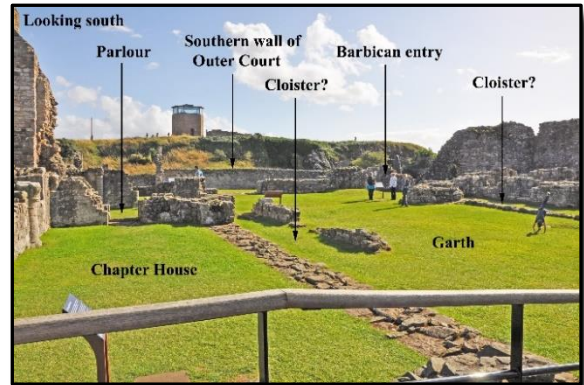
then this might suggest that instead of congregating in the churchyard near an open LSW suitable applicants might await the moment of transubstantiation in the comfort of the north transept. Bearing in mind that the availability of this indulgence had ceased by c.1350 and only came into force after the 4th Lateran Council of 1215, the emergency creation of an opening by the Priory masons rather than going to the bother of inserting a new window, would have been a pragmatic solution. On the other hand of course the gap might just have been created for a shortcut?



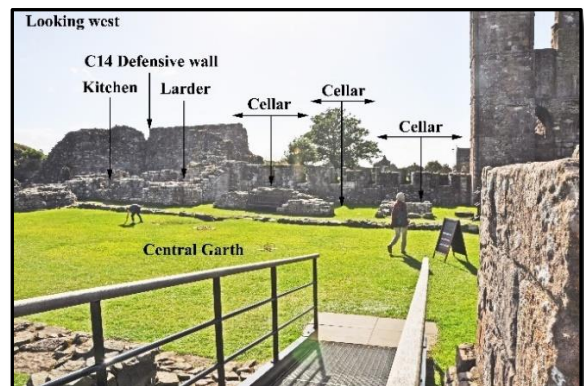
Detail of Lindisfarne Priory Groundplan (courtesy English Heritage).



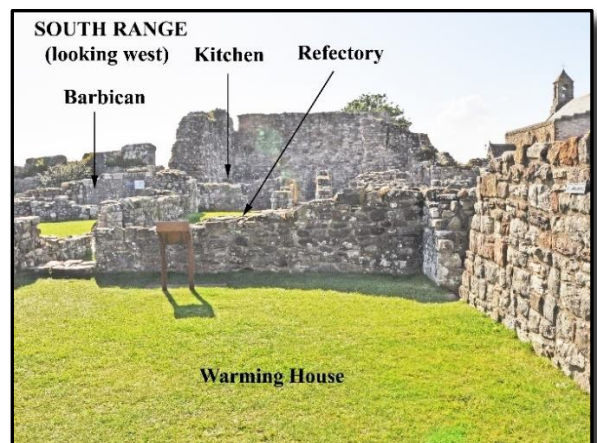
Whereas the classical arrangement of a monastery is to have the church in the north, with cloisters, chapter house and refectory arranged in a square to the south, Lindisfarne does not *quite* conform to this pattern.



South of the church where one might expect to find the cloister and its garth, we do indeed find attached to the south transept of the church, the chapter house. This particular 'leg of the square' is called the 'East Range'.

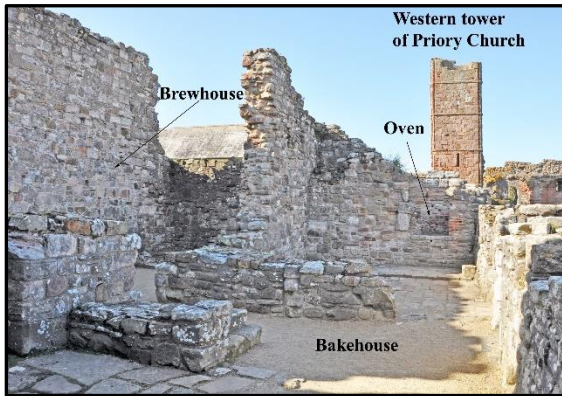


Abutting the southwest corner of the church is another 'leg known as the 'West Range' and this consists of three cellar rooms and a larder.



² It was the wanton rise in this sort of industry that contributed to a wide loss of faith in the way Roman Catholicism was being practised, and led the way towards the Reformation.

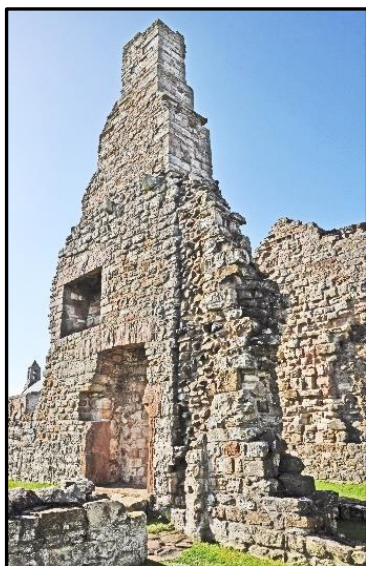
The third and transverse 'leg', the 'South Range' houses, to the west the kitchen, centrally the Refectory and to the east a 'Warming House' with the Prior's lodging above. To the north between the Warming House and the Chapter House lay the Parlour. The South Range dates from about 1250 and the other two ranges are a little earlier.



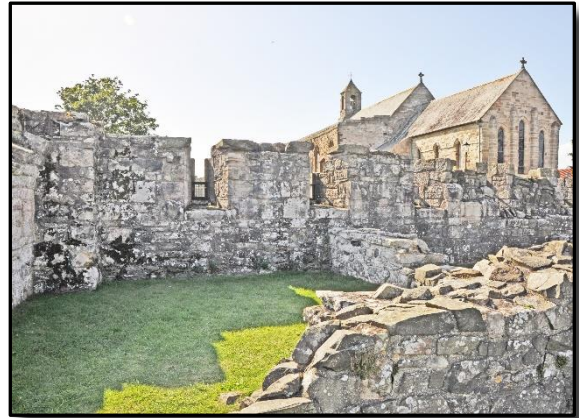
In early C14 however, more building work created 'carbuncles' outside the neat square format where it attached facilities for brewing and baking on the west side ...



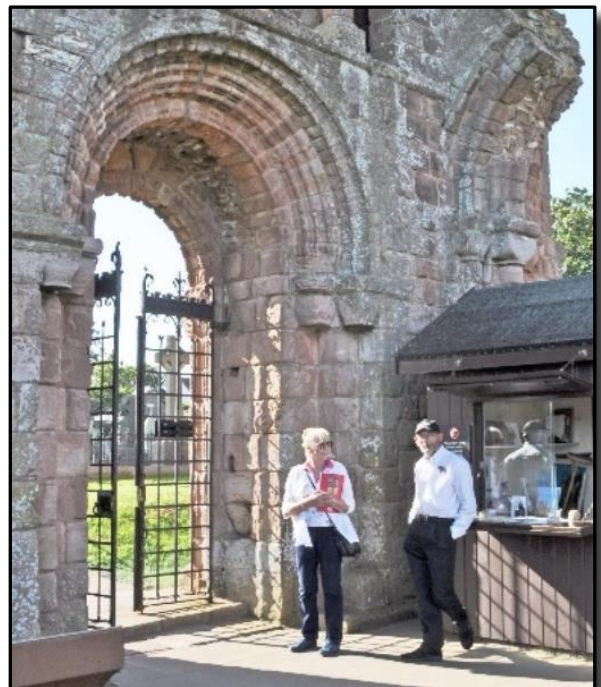
... a barbican with a secure entry to the south ...



... and provided a gigantic chimney stack on the southeast corner together with a thicker outer defence wall and tower. The chimney stack was complicit in providing comfort for the prior's lodging above, and heat for the warming room beneath. A large Outer Court complete with Guest Hall and stables was added further to the south making the whole complex a large undertaking.



As we head back to the West Door of the priory church (which the gateman was due to lock at 4.30 p.m. but kindly delayed to allow me to take more photographs) we can see that inside one of the cellar areas in the West Range, the back (western) wall has been considerably thickened as a defensive measure.



... and on now to Saint Mary's Church next door which, fortunately for me, closed rather later.

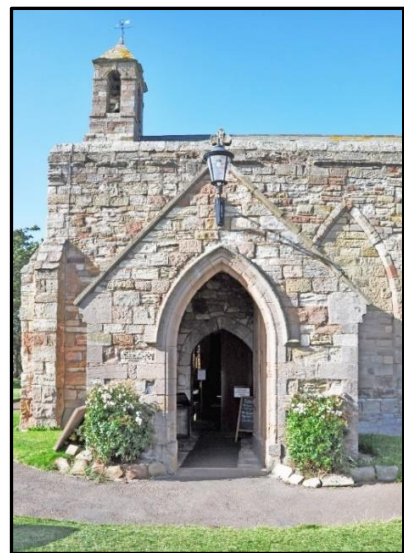
The Lindisfarne church of Saint Mary the Virgin



This is the Parish Church of Lindisfarne. Like Lindisfarne Priory it is listed Grade I and dates from C12 although some Anglo-Saxon masonry is to be found on the chancel arch. It was built on the same site as the 635 church constructed by Bishop Aidan.



The church viewed from the west with Lindisfarne Priory behind it.



The south porch is a C19 addition.

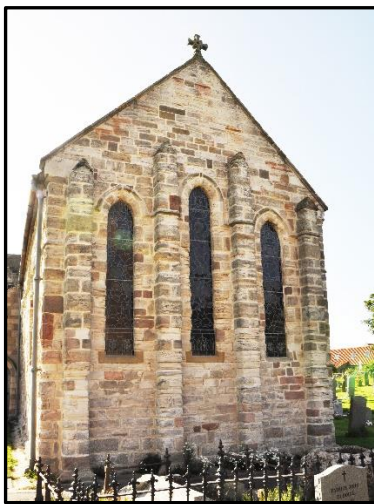


The south aisle of the nave, with its (rather-too-wide-to-be-original) Early English style Gothic windows, dates from 1304 when it was founded as a Chantry Chapel by William de Goswick. To the east of this is the newer C14 chancel built around the smaller original apsidal chancel.

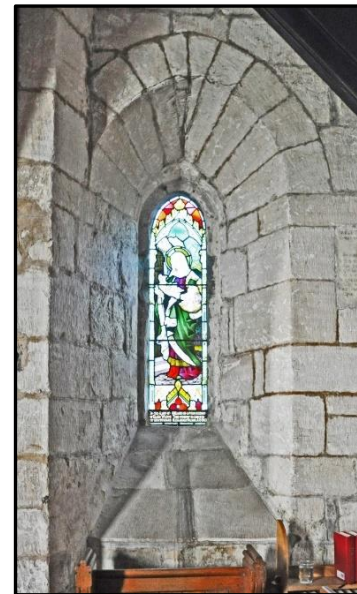
its typically 'cramped' position close to the angle of the walls.



The lower part would have been blocked some time after 1350 but have been open at eye level when it was first installed which would have been soon after 1230 ...



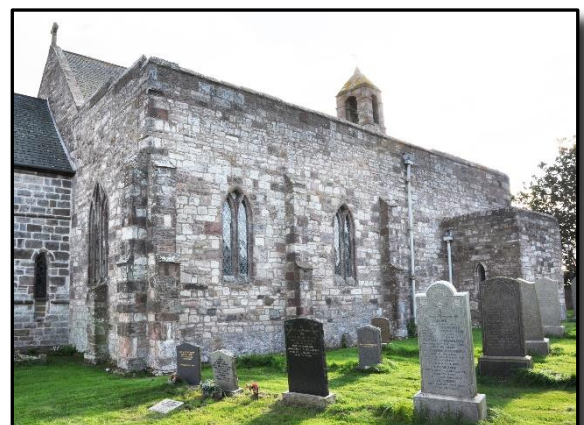
The east wall of the chancel with its three Early English style windows dates from C13 and later.



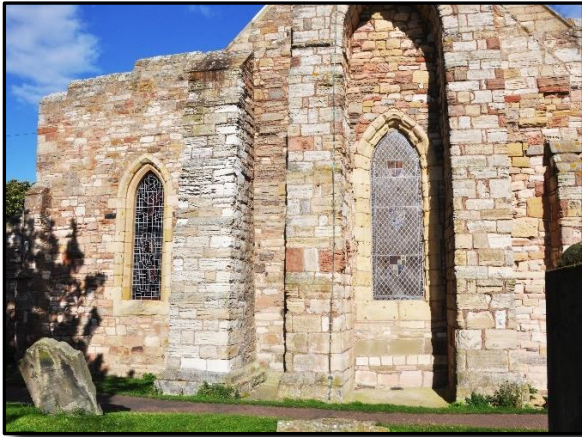
... and this is how it looks from inside the church. We will see its context within the interior aspect of the north wall later.



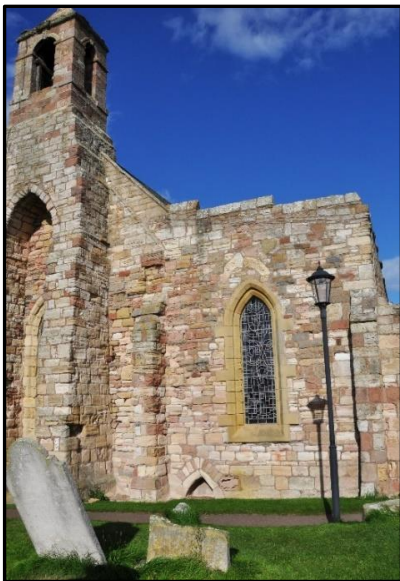
More lancet windows in the C13 north wall of the chancel. and here we have a classic example of a Low Side Window of the type mentioned previously in relation to the Priory Church. Note



The wall of the north aisle dates from late C13 – a little later than the internal arcade.



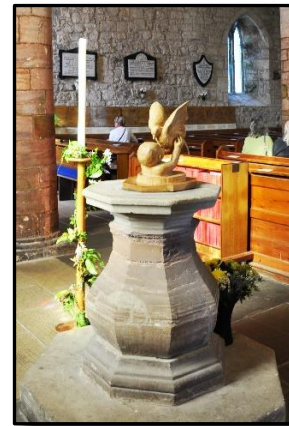
The lancet window at the west end of the church is Victorian. Two gigantic buttresses lend their support.



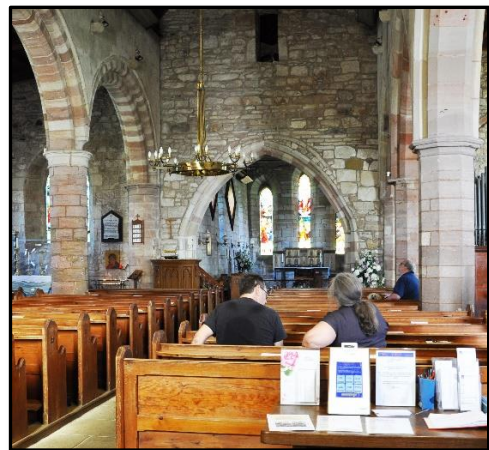
The bellcote dates from 1723.



Entering the church via the Victorian south porch I looked for signs of Scratch Dials having been present but I suspect the masonry has been cleaned and the evidence removed.



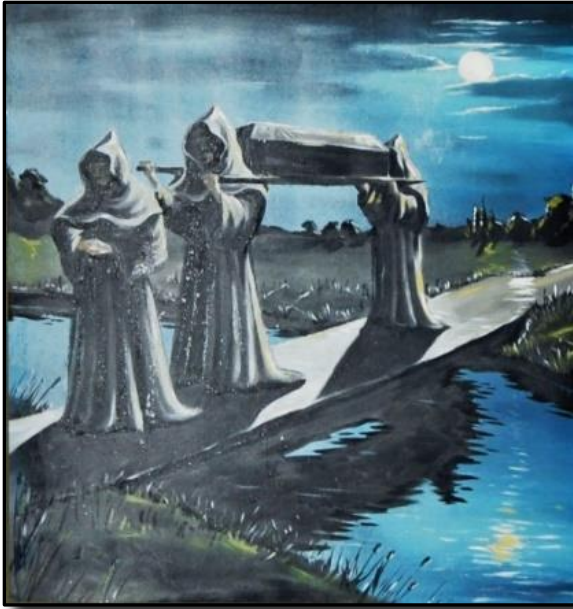
Inside the doorway is a C18 baluster font.



Due to the 'optical warmth' of the stonework the spacious building feels quite cosy. It is likely to be another matter in the depths of winter of course. I found the white voussoirs alternating with the pink masonry of the arches of the north arcade very attractive. The north arcade itself is early, dating from 1200.



And here was a startling sight – a group of six monks bearing the body of Saint Cuthbert.



As Zina immediately pointed out, the delightful wooden sculpture is highly reminiscent of the picture on the inn-sign at Botolph's Bridge Inn on Romney Marsh which first sparked off my interest in our saint.

Saint Cuthbert's story

He is believed to have been born in Dunbar, Scotland in 634 and died on 20th March 687. This means he was about fourteen years younger than Botolph and died seven years after him. He was essentially a younger contemporary, although in life he was of a similar standing.

In 651, when he was about seventeen he had a vision (whilst working as a shepherd) of Bishop Aidan of Lindisfarne's soul being carried to heaven by angels; it was only later that he discovered that Aidan had indeed died that night. As a result of the impression that this made on him he became a religious, first joining the monastery at Ripon where he was professed as a monk, and then in 664 becoming prior at Melrose. He was consecrated bishop there in 684. Two years later he resigned his bishopric in order to lead a more contemplative life – initially on Saint Cuthbert's Island and then on Inner Farne, but he died twelve months later on 20th March 687. On the face of it, this seems a comparatively short and rather unremarkable life. He was buried inside the wooden church on the site that is now occupied by St Mary the Virgin's church at Lindisfarne.

However in 698 his tomb, for some reason, was opened and his body was found to be undecayed – a sure sign of sainthood – so his body was enshrined and his cult established.

His place as Bishop of Lindisfarne was immediately taken over by **Eadfrith** (d.721) who became a great promoter of Saint Cuthbert's cult.

It is thought that Eadfrith was the scribe and artist responsible for the famous illuminated manuscript known as the Lindisfarne Gospels which were written in about 700. He also commissioned three lives of Saint Cuthbert – the first was written between 699 and 705 by an anonymous writer. Eadfrith then commissioned the Venerable Bede to re-write the *Vitae* in both prose and verse. Eadfrith also oversaw the restoration of the hermitage on Inner Farne where Cuthbert had spent his last healthy days.

In essence Eadfrith was very diligent in marketing the cult of Saint Cuthbert – but it did not end there. The Vikings first raided Lindisfarne in 793, and by 875 the danger had become so acute that they abandoned the island taking Cuthbert's and Eadfrith's relics with them together with the monastery's treasures. In 882 they re-established themselves at Chester-le-Street and in 995 moved again to Durham where a century later the Cathedral Priory was built specifically to house a shrine containing Saint Cuthbert's relics to promote pilgrimage in veneration of his cult.

The same principal was being applied all over the country as cult centres vied with each other to profit from the votive offerings such a project would bring.

Saint Eadfrith

This saint is relevant to the Saint Botolph Story as he travelled widely throughout the country being linked with Saint Botolph in the west country at Leominster – not far from Much Wenlock where you will recall Saint Botolph was, in his latter years, overseer of the abbey.

I had some conversation on this subject in February 2018 with Peter Holliday – a member of the SOSB who lives in Leominster. He was responding to my query regarding a rumour of a Saint Botolph's Chapel in his region. Peter told me of a Leominster foundation legend connected with Saint Milburga and written in C11 and a medieval poem of c.1350 which recounts what seems to be a C7 missionary journey of Eadfrith. The relevant part of the text of the poem is:

"the Lorde byd Edfrith goe into the southe... This message Edfrith did unfold/ to Bothall (Botolph?) a most godlie man/ who much rejoiced to hear it told.."

Clearly there is more research to be done here but the resurgence of Saint Eadfrith at Lindisfarne brought Peter Holliday's useful snippet of information back to mind again.

To return to St Mary the Virgin's Church.

In C12 the nave was widened by the addition of a north aisle with its arcade of rounded piers and capitals.



The north chapel seems to be appropriately devoted to the fishing and sailing community since a plethora of sea paraphernalia surrounds the altar.



If, whilst near the altar, we turn back towards the nave and look upwards we see masonry that remains from the Anglo-Saxon era.

It is suggested in some of the literature that the stones are part of the earlier Anglo-Saxon chancel arch but, whereas they are almost certainly part of the original masonry, they would of course have formed a round arch rather than a pointed gothic one.



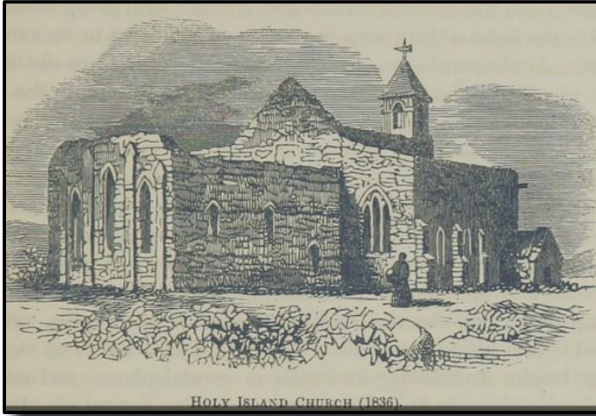
The Chancel originally, like the Priory, had an apsidal east end copying the foundations of the chancel of the Anglo-Saxon church beneath. The apse was replaced when the chancel was extended in C13.



And looking to our right while standing at the altar, the window on the near left of this picture is the Low Side Window we saw outside and this image shows its context within the presbytery. In C14 when it was in use there would have been little or no furniture against this wall. Nor would the opening have been glazed but would have been closed by a wooden shutter when not in use. The base of the window would have reached to the top of the wooden chair in the picture above and this would have allowed the priest ample opportunity to demonstrate the monstrance containing the host to the eager indulgents waiting outside.



To the right of the altar at the southeast corner of the south wall is the piscina.



If we needed any further proof, this etching from 1836 should leave us in no doubt about the matter.



A mason's mark from one of the c.1304 columns of the southern arcade.



There is a lot going on at this not-so-little church, like this modern thought-provoking representation of The Last Supper, but sadly we must now 'call it a day'.

Conclusion

There is more that I could write about the characters mentioned in this issue and their connection with our saint but time precludes. I think however that it is becoming clear that C7

saw a web of activity going on between the holy people who were enthusiastic about promoting Christianity in those early days. Many of them found sainthood and some became more famous than others – perhaps due to clever (or lucky) marketing by individuals and institutions that promoted their cults.

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 dp@botolph.info saying 'YES PLEASE.' If you wish to UNsubscribe then send the message 'NO THANKS.'

If you wish to purchase any of the books of the Botolph Trilogy please use the same email address.

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.'

Types of Botolph Church sites:-

The list of classifications I use has been subject to constant revision over the past ten years. The current version, first revised in December 2020, is as follows:

1. A church on a site which might have been founded directly by St Botolph during his life or by his acolytes soon after his death.
 2. A church the original of which is thought to have been the product of Danish landowners (c.878-890, c.1016-1035).
 3. A church originating from and as a result of Monastic Revival (c. 950 - 1016).
 4. A church which, even if it had a humble predecessor on the same site, mainly blossomed as a result of opulence gained from the wool trade (c. 1150-1450).
 5. A church lying on or close to one of the major ancient trackways, rivers, Roman roads or city gates, the proximity of which merits the suspicion that a major aspect of the function of the church has for a long while been closely linked with long-distance travel.
 6. A church lying on or close to a pilgrimage route. Churches roles have always needed to be flexible. The **Type 6** classification takes into account the increased influence of pilgrimage that occurred from late C12.
- * A star is added to the 'Type' when the church lies on a county border.

Changing functionality.

One church will often have fulfilled many roles during its lifetime so a 'type' will often be transient and need to be defined by dates.

Typical Characteristics of early St Botolph Churches.

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

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