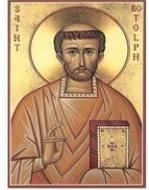




The Botolphian

Newsletter of
The Society of Saint Botolph

www.botolph.info



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Issue Number: 30

1st October 2015

Highlights this month

- St Botolph's church Ratcliffe-on-the-Wreake, Leicestershire.
- Welcome to new members: Revd Andrew Richardson (St Botolph's, London, Aldgate) who is acting as chaplain whilst Laura Jorgensen is on maternity leave.
- Emails from Father Pachomius, Joanna and George Comer, Revd David Murdoch, Michael Hale, Peter Van Demark and Kathleen Tyson Quah.
- IT IS **STILL NOT TOO LATE TO JOIN US FOR THE SOSB ANNUAL LUNCHEON ON TUESDAY 13th OCTOBER 2015 AT THE CAMBRIDGE CITY HOTEL AT 12.30 for 1 p.m. at £25 which includes two courses and tea or coffee. FINAL CLOSING DATE Saturday 3 October.**

Editorial

In a month's time I am proposing to set out on a six-month 'Author's Virtual Journey' during which I shall put myself in Botolph's shoes to investigate, amongst other things, the feasibility of his founding a considerable number of churches. In other words I shall be writing Volume III of the Botolph Trilogy.

I have already done much of the research and, for the past three years I have had the story's outline in my head. In some ways this will be the most difficult volume to write since the first volume covered eighteen years and the second volume nine years whereas this will cover a massive 33 years.

In circumstances where there is a severe paucity of historical evidence I believe that there is no better way (maybe even no *other* way) of 'prospecting for the truth' than to do the literary equivalent of rolling up one's sleeves and

immersing oneself in the basics of the known facts. For me this involves plotting minutely where Botolph *could* have - and, in many circumstances, *would have* been; how long it would have taken him to get there; who he would have met on the way; what difficulties he would have encountered; his triumphs and his failures. In many of these newsletters I have been optimistically hinting that many of the churches might have been founded personally by our saint. Well now the time has come to work it all out. *Could* he have travelled that far? *Would* he have had time to run a busy abbey as well as tramping the trackways? Would he have met opposition from the clerical and lay powers that then existed as well as from his own people? Life would not have been easy for him - and, making a 'proper job' of Volume III - i.e. a story which comes across as a serious and plausible possibility, will not be easy for me either. On that basis I am hoping for some Divine Inspiration and perhaps some too from Botolph himself?

This volume will be an honest attempt to work out what *really* happened to him but of course I am aware from correspondence that many of you who have read the first two tomes have formed more of an affinity for his irreverent friend Luka than for Botolph himself.

Luka will continue to feature prominently in the tale. It is, after all, not a documentary but an attempt to bring the excitement of the seventh century to life whilst at the same time plotting the activities of our saint.

Church Feature

Ratcliffe-on-the-Wreake,
Leicestershire.

Approach: Coming from Leicester take the Loughborough Rd/A6 and leave the roundabout at the third exit A46. After 5.3 miles take the exit to Sileby/Ratcliffe. At the junction turn right into Broome Lane then bear left into Main Street and you will see the church on your right. We parked on the left side of the road tucked well in but you could drive on and take the first turning on your right and park in Church Road.

Key: The church is normally kept locked. For access contact the churchwarden Beryl Preston, Tel 01664 424-647. 28 Broom Lane, Ratcliffe-on-the-Wreake, LE7 4SB.

Vicar: Revd Lorna Brabin-Smith Tel: 01664 424-962.

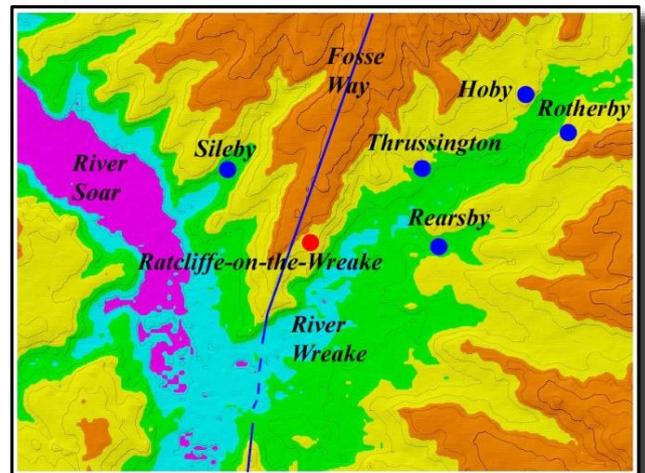
Church services: on the first, second and fourth Sunday of each month - at 6.30 p.m. in the summer and 5.30 p.m. in the winter.

Location: Main Street, Ratcliffe-on-the-Wreake, Leicestershire LE7 4SF. NGR: SK6304614534. 52.7248, -1.0681.

Listed Grade: II*

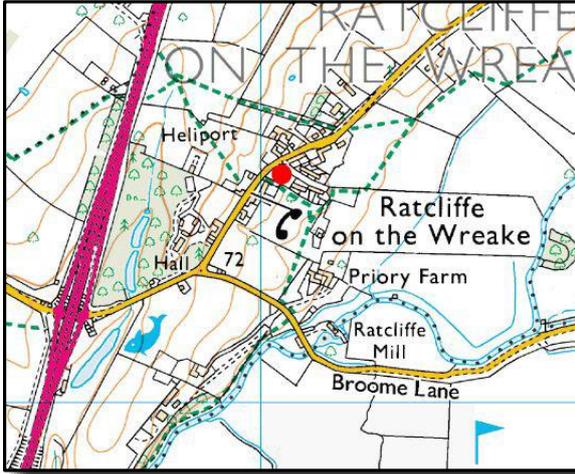


Even the name 'Ratcliffe' does not smack of ancient heritage - and yet the village was recorded in the 1086 Domesday Book as part of the hundred of Goscote. It comprised 5 households, 4 ploughlands and a mill. No church was mentioned. The name of the village is said to derive from 'Red Cliff' and on our contour map we can see that, if the soil were red, it would have presented that appearance.



At first sight, without St Botolph's, Ratcliffe-on-the-Wreake would look like a village without a history. Wikipedia gets very *unexcited* about it telling us (apart from the fact of the existence of the church) only about the 1812 Ratcliffe Hall and the aerodrome's 1930 Air Pageant where 'there was one crash but no one was killed.' But there *is* a St Botolph's so - q.e.d. - the village *must* have a history. This is what old churches in general do for our dwelling-places. They shout "I was born in 1310 (or whatever)" and Botolph Churches shout louder than most since the dedication itself is highly suggestive of a very long pedigree.

In this issue of the *Botolphian* we are delving deeper into Danelaw so also marked on this map (in blue) are the nearest settlements of Viking origin. Our old friend the Fosse Way passes close to Ratcliffe and its wayfarers would have had to ford the river to the south. The map shows that the Wreake loses its strength at Rearsby so, at low water, it would have been nicely shallow at its junction with the Soar.



On our visit in March 2015, the churchwarden, Beryl Preston, opened the church for us and kindly presented me with a sheaf of papers about the church's history.

The first thing that one notices is the enormous limestone spire. We are told that this was restored in 1812 and in the absence of further information one guesses that its original must date from within a century or so of the main part of the tower being built - perhaps in response to a change in fashion that occurred from 'decorated' to the loftier 'perpendicular' architecture. The second thing that stands out is that the fabric of the church is not made of the sandstone that we are used to seeing but of solid pink and grey granite.

The church has had major renovation work at least twice - between 1790 and 1810, paid for by Earl Ferrers at a cost of £300 and then in 1869 when it was 'again dilapidated' and was restored by Revd Woodcock at a cost of £1,000.



Before you enter the south porch (the original early C19 porch was rebuilt in 1967) veer round to your right and take a look at the Mass Dials on the cill of the adjacent window.



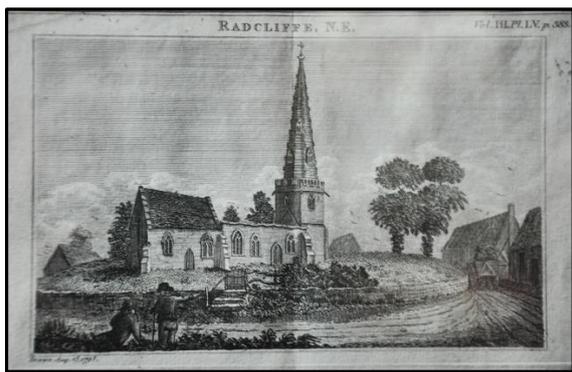
I must admit to missing these on my visit and I am unable to enlarge the photograph any further without blurring. It looks to me however that, rather than just one dial, there is a whole set!



Continuing on the theme of time, the church possesses a clock made by Whitehurst and Son of Derby and installed in 1814. Whitehursts had been invited to tender for the new clock (popularly now known as Big Ben) at the Palace of Westminster but, in spite of their having made a clock for the purpose, their tender was unsuccessful. In 1971 the mechanism of Ratcliffe's clock was replaced by a synchronous electric motor as a result of which it does not now strike the hours or chime the quarters. Sadly this drastically reduces the clock's usefulness since, not only can it now not be heard, but it cannot easily be seen either since its single northerly face is hidden from the road by the churchyard trees. The picture below which illustrates this is taken from Church Road and which, as mentioned in the introduction, offers visitors another entrance and parking area.



The late C18 etching (below) shows the church without the trees - but also of course without the clock ... and without a roof on the nave.



The church is not unable to make itself heard however since there is a ring of six bells weighing between 3 and 5 hundredweight each. Thomas Mears of London cast the three oldest in 1811 and supplied the two other bells that, in 1814, made up the original peal. A new millenium bell, cast

by John Taylor of Loughborough, was added in 1998.



Standing at the back of the nave, the arches to your left are indicative of the earlier presence of a north aisle which was removed during the 1790-1810 renovations carried out by the Lord of the Manor, Robert Shirley, the 7th Earl Ferrers (1756-1827). The crocketed spire was also rebuilt in 1812 and restored again in 1995.

The Ratcliffe-on-the-Wreake estates had originally been owned by the Norman family of Bassets - who are one of England's most ancient dynasties having settled here immediately after the Norman Conquest. The demesne was transferred to the Shirley (Earl Ferrers) family in C15.

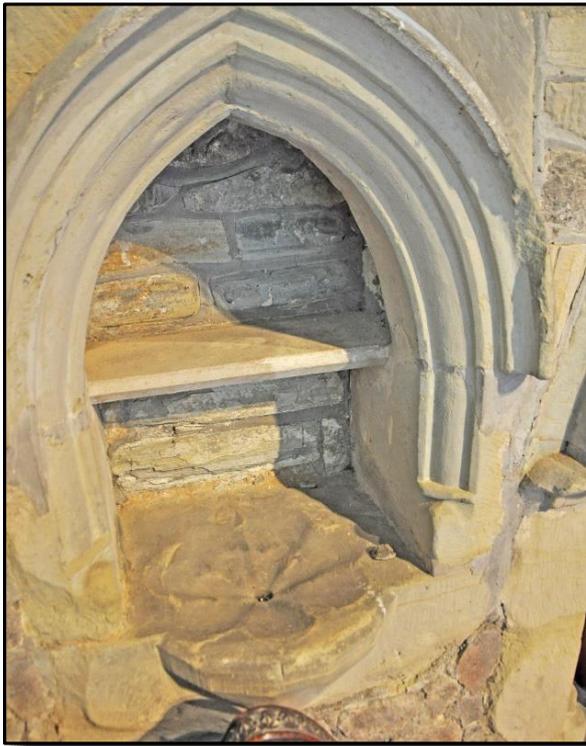


The sanctuary has a simple oak altar table behind which is a carved panel with a central cross flanked by the letters Alpha and Omega.

One unusual feature to be noticed here is that you step *down* two steps from the nave into the chancel and then up two steps into the sanctuary.



In the alcove to the left of the altar lies the effigy of a tonsured monk wearing ecclesiastical vestments. Recent restoration work has shown that the effigy was originally painted. It is thought to be that of Thomas de Ratcliffe who was born locally and died c.1389. It is likely that he was a member of the Basset family. After leaving Ratcliffe he became an Augustinian friar at Leicester Abbey where he was ordained a Bishop within the order. He became Bishop of Dromore in Ireland and suffragan bishop of Durham.



Of the three windows in the south wall of the chancel the centre one's design is of Y-tracery whereas the other two are geometric (this refers to the shape of the fine stonework supporting the glass). The difference between the windows is seen more easily from the picture taken outside. Some of the glass fragments within the centre window are medieval.

The bulbous font is of Norman origin and is therefore the oldest stonework in the church. It is set on a C19 raised stone plinth.

To the right of the altar is a C14 piscina which has a rather prettily decorated bowl and the unusual extra facility of a shelf. To the right of this, on the church's south wall is an attractive triple sedilia.



High up on the south wall of the nave the date 1310 is carved and etched in black. How relevant this is is difficult to tell.



One of the headstones near the porch commemorates 60 year old 'Samuel Matthews, labourer, who had both his legs broke and one of his ankles dislocated by falling off a load of **beans** on Mr King's farm ... and died in Leicester Infirmary on October 13th 1839.'

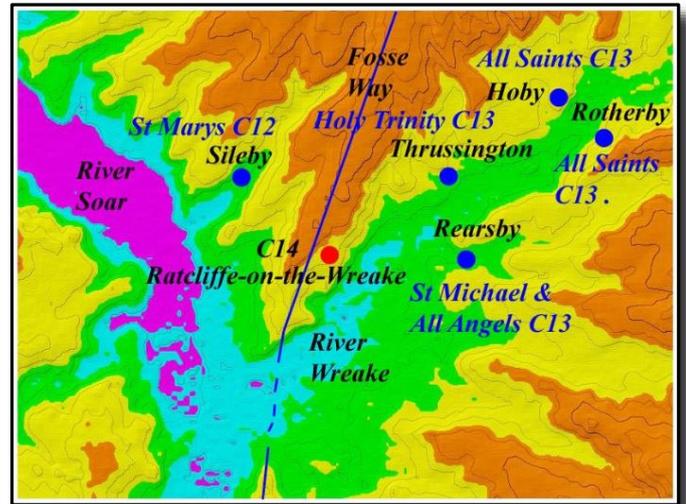
Summary of items of interest:

- (i) The crocketed spire.
- (ii) Mass dials on the cill near the porch.
- (iii) Arches in nave indicating old north aisle.
- (iv) Effigy in sanctuary north wall.
- (v) Piscina in sanctuary south wall
- (vi) Triple sedilia in sanctuary south wall
- (vii) Medieval glass in chancel window.
- (viii) Dated stone in south wall of nave.
- (ix) Church Warden's chest.
- (x) Alms Board on west wall.
- (xi) Sundry interesting early tombstones
- (xii) Not generally on view but the church also possesses: a pre-Reformation parcel gilt paten; an Elizabethan chalice; a late-Georgian paten and chalice (donated by Earl Ferrers); a modern ciborium and crystal ewer.

Classification of the site:

Glancing back at the RM contour map, all the neighbouring 'Viking villages' also have an ancient church each of which has what the Normans might have called a 'respectable dedication' as shown in the picture below. Each would have satisfied Gallic tradition in that none bore the abhorrent (to the Normans) signs of a perpetuated British saint.

But *all* the churches are older than Ratcliffe. At first sight this would seem to suggest that Saint Botolph's Church was a late starter but, on such a prominent headland it is more likely that this would be the *first* place to build a church, not the last place.



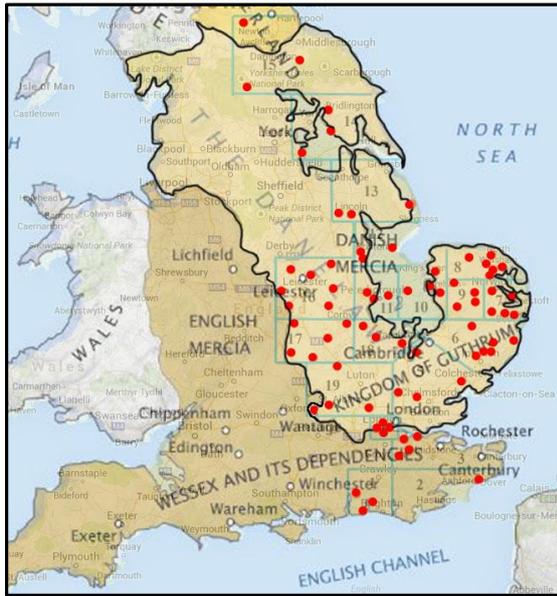
I suspect that the foundation of the church we see today was undertaken to update the original ancient (Saint Botolph's Church) predecessor in line with the churches of its neighbouring villages. I think the Normans sponsored the building of the neighbouring churches on the foundations of (probably wooden) Danish ones and then dedicated them according to Norman tradition. It may be (assuming it was the Norman nobility who sponsored its renovation - was it perhaps the Basset family?) that the Botolph church was left until later *because* of its traditional British dedication.

Perhaps in C12 it was thought impolitic to 'restore' Saint Botolph's at the same time as nearby Sileby because that might have meant re-dedicating the church to a Biblical or (Heaven forbid) French saint and this would have risked upsetting the locals. Rather than open that particular can of worms, the church might have been left for a couple of hundred years until 1066 was more of a faint memory by which time the sponsors too had become less sensitive about strange British customs and so the dedication was allowed to remain the same. It is likely that this sort of routine was common all over England between C11 and C14.

I believe that this church site would have been founded either in C10 or C7 and I think C7 is the more likely of the two. We then have to consider whether St Botolph himself might have had any influence in selecting the site. Assuming that his Icanho Abbey was at Iken in Suffolk, Ratcliffe-on-the-Wreake is a long way from there and so his participation seems unlikely.

I would therefore suggest a classification of B(i) - a church site founded before AD 800 and dedicated to St Botolph because it was on a traveller's (Fosse Way) route.

The Botolph Patterns Part 2. (Continued from last month)



Above: Saint Botolph Churches and their relationship to The Danelaw.

Danelaw.

The Vikings consisted of Danes and Norwegians. Viking *raids* started in England in 787 and continued for 75 years or so until the actual *invasion* of 865. In 869 the Great Heathen Army desecrated Saint Botolph's Abbey of Icanho (together with many other abbeys). The following year King Edmund was brutally murdered by Ivan the Boneless. In 875 the Heathen Army divided into two with Halfdan Ragnarsson leading his half north while Guthrum established a base in East Anglia.

In 878 King Alfred the Great defeated Guthrum at Ethundun (Edington, Wiltshire) and at Alfred's demand Guthrum became a Christian and was baptised. He and Alfred agreed the Danelaw which laid out boundaries behind which the Danes would live and administer self-rule. Danish expansion had been halted by the strengths of Mercia in the west and Wessex and Kent in the south.

Guthrum died in East Anglia in 890 and Viking hopes of creating their own kingdom were finally dashed when their warlord Eric Bloodaxe was driven out of Northumbria in 954.

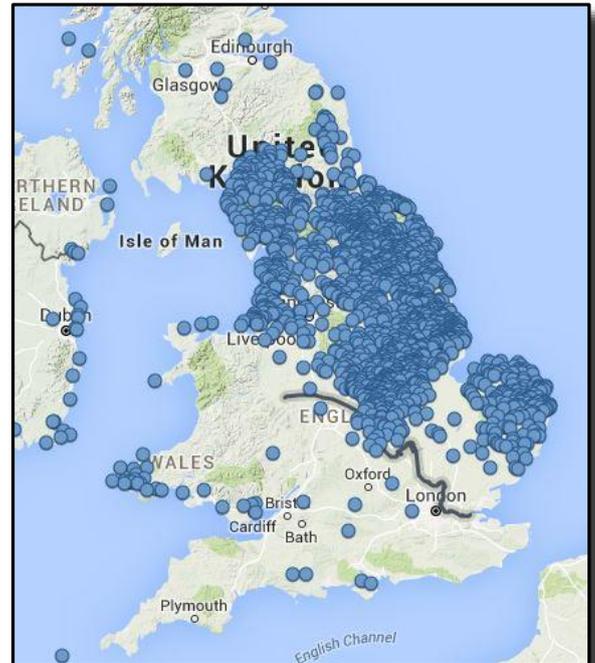
Danelaw began to dissolve. Some Danes went home but many simply integrated. Denmark itself remained pagan until 965 when Harald Bluetooth brought both unity and Christianity to the country.

What can this tell us about the builders of Botolph Churches?

We have seen from the map above, that Botolph Churches are found predominantly in what was

the Danelaw Zone. The Vikings who ruled in England are known to have built Christian churches in their own country.

One would expect therefore that many of our Botolph Churches would have been built by the resident Vikings *but this seems not to have been the case*. We know that many of the English villages founded by Danish settlers bear the suffix '*-by*'. Of our 76 Saint Botolph Church sites only *one* bears a name with such a suffix and that is Saxilby near Lincoln.



Above: Places with Danish names (from the British Library).

Viking settlements are not exclusively identified from the '*-by*' suffixes however - there are other indicators of the immigrant toponymy - for example Carlton-in-Cleveland (which harbours a Botolph's Church) can be identified as being Danish due to the '*Karl-* (peasant) and *-ton* (farm)' elements. The *-thorpe* and *-thwaite* suffixes are also predominantly Danish but it is the '*-by*' suffix which remains the most prolific and easiest means of identification.

To be continued ...

My grateful thanks

... to Beryl Preston of Ratcliffe-on-the-Wreake for opening the church for us and for the sheaf of papers which proved so useful.

... and to Revd Lorna Brabin-Smith for proof reading my draft of the church feature and for furnishing me with extra little snippets which I have included in the text.

Readers' letters and emails.

1. Father Pachomius wrote one of his attractively waggish emails from the Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Brookline, Massachusetts teasing me for mixing up Canterbury and Cambridge but then poured oil on troubled waters by writing 'Thank you for your efforts to promote the knowledge of St Botolph. All joking aside, I esteem your labors highly' - so we are friends again now!

2. Joanna and George Comer gave apologies for the forthcoming luncheon. They are particularly sorry to miss the tour of St Botolph's as one of George's ancestors was rector there and founded Queens' College. Joanna sent everyone best wishes for an enjoyable day.

3. Revd David Murdoch from St Botolph's Iken, sent his apologies for this year's luncheon.

4. Michael Hale also sent apologies for himself and Wendy. He is at present recovering from a recent operation. We wish you good and rapid progress Michael.

5. Peter Van Demark from the St Botolph's Club in Boston USA, wrote to say that he was visiting England but about to leave for Bucharest. Sadly therefore we were unable to meet - another time I hope.

6. Kathleen Tyson Quah - a regular supporter of the luncheon, wrote saying that she is unable to attend this year due to her degree class at King's College clashing with our event. We will be sad not to see you Kathleen but I am sure you have your priorities right.

Endnotes

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: Neither of the above.

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Folkestone, Kent. 1st May 2013.