



The Botolphian

Newsletter of
The Society of Saint Botolph

www.botolph.info



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Highlights this month

- **The lost St Botolph chapel of Scarning, Norfolk.**
- It gives me great pleasure to welcome the following new members: Douglas Perkins, Colin Tulfer, David March, Bernard Mee, Brian Moss, John Evans and John Goodsell - all from Maidstone in Kent. I also welcome the return of Harriet Enholme from Finland.
- Correspondence from Jean Gibran from Boston USA and from Revd Paula Griffiths from sb Hadstock.



What possible reference could this picture have to a Saint Botolph church? Read on!

Editorial

Firstly my best wishes to you all for a Very Happy Christmas and a happy and healthy 2020. Prosperity of course I wish you too but also to those St Botolph Church communities who I know are struggling away trying to improve the facilities for their congregations, adding toilets and kitchens to their church halls and trying to find the

money and letter-writing time to repair roofs where lead has been stolen. It is the time of the year when we thank you for all your hard work.

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I have some loose ends to tie up this month and I thought ruefully of Hughes Mearns poem:

*Last night I saw upon the stair
A little man who wasn't there
He wasn't there again today
Oh how I wish he'd go away.*

A parody sprang into my mind as I set about my task:

*Tonight I sat upon a chair
And considered a chapel no longer there.
Because it is not here today
My task is to discover why it went away.*

This month's missing St Botolph chapel is that of Scarning in Norfolk. One of the things I say when I give my *Voyages around Saint Botolph Churches* talks is that each month when I start to write the *Botolphian* I look with some trepidation at the subject before me and wonder what I might find - or worse still - what I might not find. This latter thought comes even more to the fore when I find I am writing about a 'chapel which is not there.'

In the previous 78 *Botolphians* I have rarely differentiated between 'churches' and 'chapels' and have often used the word 'church' in a generic form to cover all eventualities. The time has come to clarify this.

Chapels come in (at least) eight different varieties which can be subdivided into:

A. Attached chapels (associated with monasteries, parochial churches and vicarages) and these are:

1. **Chapels of Ease** - of which it is thought that as many as 4,000 were built between C12 and C17 for the convenience of worshippers who lived at a distance from the main church.
2. **Oratory chapels** - usually associated with monasteries - for secluded devotions.

Chapels of Ease were financed by the diocese and (like St Botolph's at Botesdale in Suffolk) have generally survived whereas Oratory chapels were financed by monasteries etc which, after their dissolution during the Reformation, resulted in the chapels falling into ruin.

Finding Eanswythe (a Folkestone research group to which I belong) has for many months been struggling to locate the exact site of a chapel that was named after the C7 saint who is said to have founded a nunnery in Folkestone. Similarly her relative St Mildburg from Much Wenlock in Shropshire is reputed to have had an Oratory Chapel at nearby Barrow but both of these have become lost due to the passage of time and paucity of historical records.

B. Free chapels (i.e. detached from monasteries, parochial churches and vicarages). These, again in alphabetical order are:

1. **Chantry chapels** established for masses to be sung for the soul of the founder and maintained by endowment.
2. **Field chapels** - quickly-produced small wooden constructions which in the fullness of time would often be replaced by a church. It should be noted that if these were the product of a monastery (like Icanho) then they could not properly be called 'free' chapels.
3. **Private chapels** - built by people such as manorial lords for their private worship and perhaps subsequent burial.
4. **Shrine chapels** - established at the burial or relic site of a revered person who might or might not eventually be regarded as a saint.
5. **Thanksgiving chapels** - e.g. that built at Dover by a nobleman who survived shipwreck. Henry VIII made an offering of 6s. 8d. to this chapel for a safe voyage in 1532.
6. **Wayside chapels** - built on highways and operated by religious people for the comfort of the souls and bodies of those on long journeys.

Most of these Free Chapels were entirely dependent upon the communities which founded

them and if those communities lost interest or died out, the lack of support resulted in the building's demise. On the brighter side, Field and Wayside chapels - particularly it seems when dedicated to Saint Botolph - were often destined for greater things and gradually developed into full-blown churches whereupon they were adopted by dioceses which could perhaps see great potential from votive offerings.

A question that should be considered in passing is 'Who staffed these free chapels if they were not attached to a monastery or diocese?' During the C10 Monastic Reform largely orchestrated by Bishop Aethelwold of Winchester, one of his first actions was to throw the secular clergy out of Winchester and replace them with monks. He called the secular clergy 'filth' and regarded them as unfit to serve altars or take part in any divine service.

It was probably this secular type of religious who, two centuries earlier, would have been serving at Scarning's chapel. The faith of Christianity was young then and still finding its feet. New churches were cropping up everywhere and many were run by Benedictines and similar orders but in others there was scope for private enterprise. Many secular clerics would have some qualifications - some would have been ordained - others were perhaps failed monks - many would have had honest intent - others would have been charlatans. The purpose of a chapel was as a facility for the worship of God. When the weather was bad the traveller could find shelter there - and one would have thought it logical that the prudent curator would be able to offer food and a bed for the night . . . but I am not sure if that was a regular occurrence. I would be pleased to hear from other people with knowledge of this subject.

Scarning, Norfolk.



Approach: From Norwich head west on the Dereham Road for 4.4 miles and then join the A47.

After 12 miles turn right towards Podmore and Bushy Common and the estimated location is immediately on your right.

Estimated Location: Chapel Lane, Scarning, Norfolk, NR19 2PB. Lat/Long: 52.6772, 0.8941.

I first looked at the Scarning site in 2016 and delved into the mysteries of the area with the help of a local historian and member of the Society of Saint Botolph called Nick Hartley.

Under a list of the *Chantries and Free Chapels in Norfolk* in the *Index Monasticus* written by Richard Taylor of Norwich in 1821 we find the following entry . . .

Sale	Byrsted	St. Dunstan	Ref. I.	The lady Alice de Bures. An assuage.
Southwold	South Eppingham		Ref. 1313	Assuage de Valonia, out of Poodonles. Free chapel; dissolved in 1347; valued at 3l. 10s. 4d. temp. Hen. VIII.
Scarning	Lasdish	St. Botolph		Chapel; mentioned in 1214.
Stiffage	Das	St. Andrew the Apostle		The Vices, lords of Wisbeaking. Free chapel; granted 1370.
Stiffage	Das	St. Mary	Ref. 1901	In Wisbeaking-stile; dissolved before the Dissolution.

. . . which, for those of you who do not have a magnifying glass handy, tells us that the Free Chapel in Scarning was dedicated to Saint Botolph and was last mentioned in 1514.

In 2016 I came to the conclusion that the site of the Scarning chapel was to the north of the village church and that its foundations might perhaps lie under a house called Chapel Cottage on Chapel Lane just south of the A47. I was not altogether happy about this because the location seemed a little too far away from that important source of water (in this case the Scar rivulet) to which Botolph churches seem to gravitate - and it was also more than the standard 3 miles (that arbitrary but usually accurate measurement) from the nearest Roman road. Everything began to take shape when I looked again at the 1883 Ordnance Survey map...



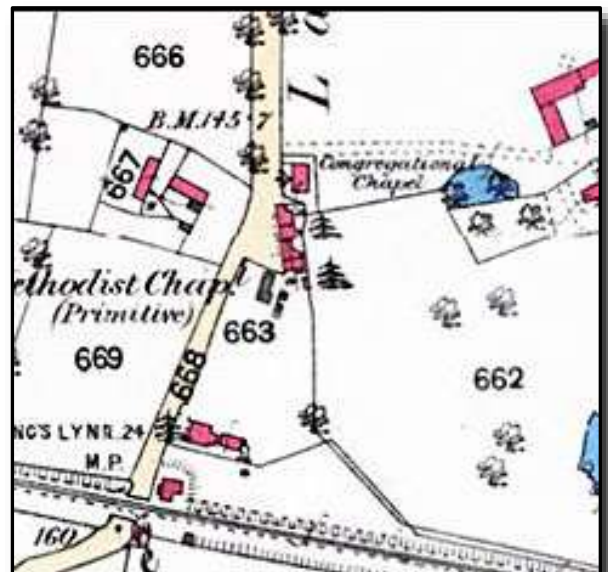
. . . and to my surprise saw a railway line running across the page and I realised that not only has Scarning lost a chapel but it has lost a railway too.

The railway was undoubtedly there once though and I wondered if the foundations of the chapel had been close to the line and were swallowed up during engineering works. No sign of the lines exist today because the railway was dismantled in 1970 and replaced by the A47 main road. I recalled that at first sight the A47 had looked extraordinarily straight to me and that it had crossed my mind that the road might have been of Roman origin.

I turned to www.disused-stations.org.uk to investigate the railway matter further whereupon I discovered that the Lynn and Dereham line was opened in 1848 - and I found the picture below.



Now is the time to confess that my reason for duplicating this picture at the beginning of this issue was to liven the page up a little! The photograph's connection with the Scarning St Botolph's chapel lies the fact that the line would have passed close by. Apparently the problem shown above was somehow caused by the driver selecting reverse instead of forward drive. Included on the disused-stations website was an 1884 Ordnance Survey map which had different annotations to the map I had been studying previously.



As well as showing the position of the old station at the bottom of the picture, there was a building labelled 'Methodist Chapel (Primitive)' together with yet another chapel - this time Congregational

- a few yards further to the north. (Trivial note: the Congregational movement was founded as early as late C16, was consolidated in 1832 and became a federation in 1972 whereas Methodism was founded in C18).

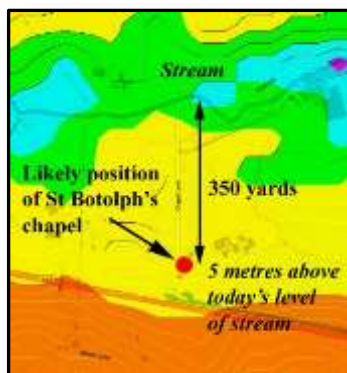
I wondered if one of these chapels might have been built on the foundations of the old St Botolph's one.



When the old map is overlaid with Google's satellite image we find that it places 'Methodist Chapel (Primitive)' in the back garden of this house.



Perhaps one day somebody might feel brave enough to knock on the door and ask the occupants if they have the remains of a St Botolph's chapel in their garden.

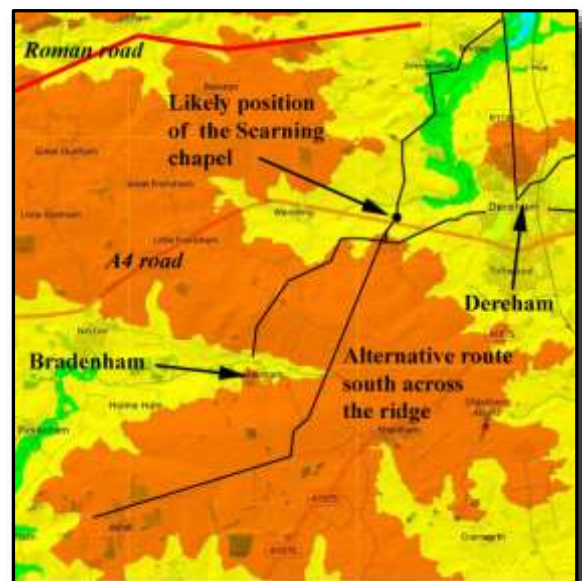


If St Botolph's chapel was on the this site it would have been placed in a much better position regarding the stream . . .



. . . and the Roman road.

Scarning has a parish church which is dedicated to Saints Peter and Paul and dates from C13. It contained two moieties, one of which belonged to Hugh de Frensham who was the rector in 1256 and the other belonged to Waltham Abbey in Essex. I began to wonder if St Botolph's Chapel was a cell of Waltham Abbey - but the *Index Monasticus* specifically defines it as a 'Free Chapel.' The Domesday Book tells us that in 1086 the tenant-in chief of the land was William de Warenne - a name which crops up regularly in these pages. I spent a lot of time staring at maps of the area - particularly relief maps and maps showing the Roman road to the north.



I looked at the routes that a traveller might take to and from the village. To the south was a hilly area (rising to 40 metres above Scarning) over which the Mediaeval wayfarer might want to cross and I

envisioned him perhaps going to Bradenham (Norfolk not Bucks) on the other side. I found little that might attract him there however and in any case walkers like to keep to the high ground and walk along or just below the ridge.



I then moved to the opposite end of a likely journey and looked again at maps of the ancient trackways of Icknield and Peddars - the former passes close by Saint Botolph's church at the *Buckinghamshire* Bradenham. I asked myself 'What was there near Scarning in which travellers might have an interest - and on scanning the maps it was not long before an answer leapt out at me.



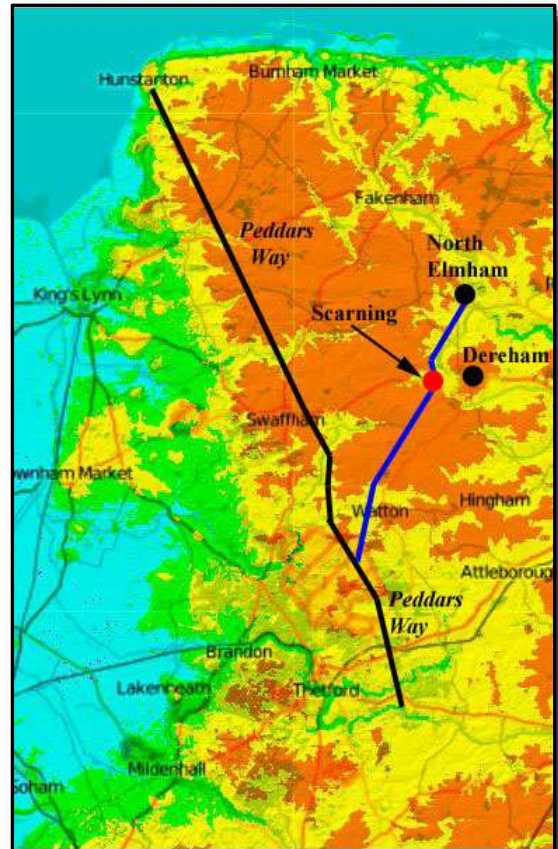
North Elmham, just six miles to the north of Scarning, became the seat of the Bishop of Norfolk in 672 when Bishop Bedwine built on his private land the foundations of what eventually became the ruined chapel (often referred to as 'North Elmham Saxon Cathedral') shown above. (My thanks to David Gill for use of this photograph).

The original building would have been wooden. Some of the stonework we see today is the late C11 work of the Norman bishop Herbert de

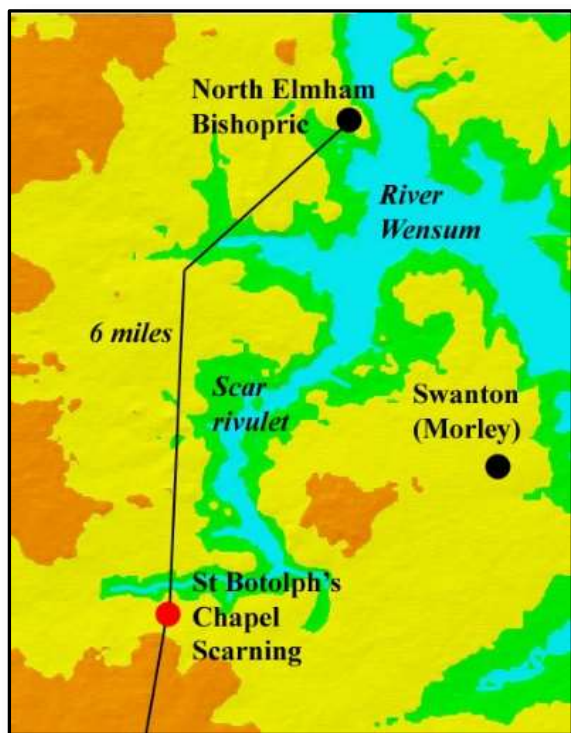
Losinga although this was modified in C14 by Bishop Henry le Despencer who, unpopular as a result of his merciless quashing of the Peasants' Revolt, converted it into a fortified house for his own protection.

In 1075 the decision was taken to re-locate all bishoprics so that they were in substantial towns so the see itself was removed from the Elmham countryside and repositioned - first in Thetford and shortly afterwards in Norwich.

It is however its C7 life in the *countryside* which must interest us because it would undoubtedly have attracted visitors.



The tail end of the Icknield way was an ever-popular route as it skirted south of the doorstep to the Isle of Ely and soon turned north to become the Peddars Way as it led up the dry side of the fens. Today's Ordnance Survey map shows the green dots of a ramblers' route branching off Peddars Way (shown above in blue) before leading towards Dereham . . . but in C7, other than housing a deer park, Dereham was of little importance. The presence of Bishop Bedwine in North Elmham would have held much greater significance and having crossed the dry-footed rolling hill to the south of Scarning the traveller would be looking for access to the western side of the then-wider River Wensum before plodding along its banks to greet his primate.



(More trivia: USA readers please note that the Swanton shown above and known from C14 as 'Swanton Morley,' was the home of Abraham Lincoln's ancestors).

When Bishop Bedwine installed his bishopric at North Elmham he did so only 18 years after St Botolph had built Icanho Abbey just 45 miles to the southeast. It is likely however that, by 672, when he had just eight years left to live, Abbot Botolph, the travelling saint, would have already roamed much of the eastern British countryside and set up the field chapels from which he hoped that larger Christian communities would grow.

This leaves us with the following questions:

1. Was Scarning's chapel founded through Icanho Abbey in St Botolph's lifetime?
2. If so, was it founded for the local community before North Elmham became a bishopric?
3. Or was it a church founded later - for the use of travellers on their way to North Elmham?

I discount the fact that it could be a post-Conquest chapel on the basis that, if I have its location more or less correct, it lies too close to SS Peter & Paul's church to be a Chapel of Ease and, using the same parameters, it must pre-date the aforementioned because there would have been no point in building the chapel once the church had become established.

Conclusion and classification

I believe the presence of this chapel must somehow be associated with the bishopric at North Elmham and that it was founded in late C7 or C8. I doubt if it had any direct connection with

Icanho but was probably dedicated to St Botolph well after his death as a result of his by then having become renowned as the Patron Saint of Travellers. The dedication might even have been suggested and the chapel itself sponsored by the then occupant of the bishop's 'palace.' In this case, in strict terms it would have been a Private Chapel.

I would suggest a classification of B(ii) - a travellers' church founded between 800 and 1066.

Correspondence

1. Jean Gibran wrote from the Saint Botolph Club in Boston USA to say that all is going well there and that they are celebrating 'St Botolph Fellows and their artistic ventures' - this usually means the production of a delightfully irreverent skit about what Botolph and his cronies might have experienced in the Dark Ages.

2. Revd Paula Griffiths wrote an interesting letter from Hadstock following the November feature . . .

Many thanks Denis for this. I was fascinated to read about Botolphs in Sussex - which I remember walking to with my mother when we were staying in Bramber for a summer holiday. I was only 8 at the time. That holiday, in the beauty of the Sussex countryside, with lovely villages, historic churches and the fascinating ruined Bramber Castle, was a revelation to a child growing up in Fulham streets and I have often wondered if it somehow helped shape my future path. I will look forward to covering it again in our St Botolph's Journeys.

Thank you Paula for those heart-warming comments. I am glad the feature brought back happy memories.

