

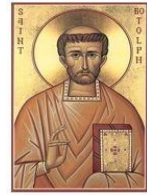


The Botolphian

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 221-777 botolph@virginmedia.com
President: Revd Timothy L'Estrange, Vicar of St.Gabriel's Church, North Acton.

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Highlights this month

- St Botolph's Church, Bradenham.
- Correspondence from Jean Stone, Emma Rose Barber, Derek Cummings, John Sennett and Roger Howlett as well as other emails of greeting and support.
- R.C.Beavis's article on 'Barber's Point'.

Editorial

Since this is a fairly full edition I think the least I say here, the better it will be. You will note that there is no 'Focus on Botolph' this month to allow room for 'Barber's Point'.

Church Feature

Bradenham.

Approach:- Approaching Bradenham on the A4010, turn eastwards along Bradenham Wood Lane and you will soon see the church ahead of you on the right. There are a few parking spaces immediately adjacent to the church - but they are on the left hand side of the road - so be prepared - and take care because the traffic is quite fast.

Key: The church is open daily.

Contact: Revd Nigel LACEY,

Email: nigellacey405@btinternet.com.

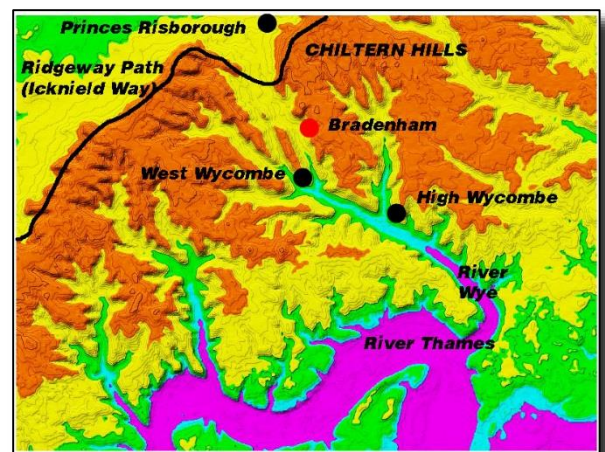
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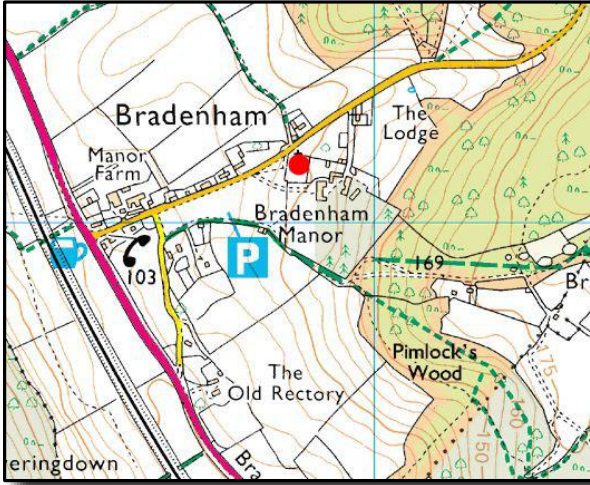
Listed Grade: II*

The village of Bradenham lies halfway between Princes Risborough and High Wycombe in a valley which cuts through the Chiltern Hills. The area is served by the River Wye. (*This is not to be confused with the 134-mile-long Wye River of Welsh-border fame*). This River Wye is only 9 miles long but it has, in the past, been notable for its water mills of which the Domesday Book

recorded eighteen in the short distance between West Wycombe and the River Thames.



Topological trivia: The name 'Wycombe' derives from a combination of the river's name plus 'combe' meaning 'deep valley'. Until 1946, High Wycombe was known as Chipping Wycombe due to its market town status (*ceapen* is Old English for 'market' ... or perhaps 'long market square'). Princes Risborough bears the first part of its title by virtue of the fact that the land was formerly owned by the Black Prince, Edward Prince of Wales (1330-1376).



Passing through this and turning back, we can see an *internal* 'tympanum' which only dates from 1935 but is a reminder that a church's history is ongoing. This feature, properly known as a 'lunette', shows St Botolph, kneeling, with Bradenham church in the background and the inscription 'St Botolph Patron of this Church AD 655'. It is too much to hope that this was the date that the original church was founded on this site but it is accurate in the sense that the date marks the building of Icanho Abbey from which this and all other Saint Botolph foundations ultimately sprang.

Meanwhile, ... back at Bradenham ... we find a village which was already well-established by the time of the 1086 Domesday survey. Like many Botolph Churches the innocent appearance of this church belies the wealth of history that has contributed to its presence.

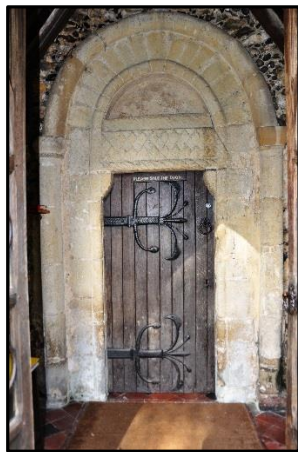


History of the existing church:

The nave dates from c.1100 and the tower from c.1500. The chancel was rebuilt in 1863. The porch (as usual) was a C19 addition.

One of the first aspects we might notice is the southern doorway with its magnificent iron hinges; it is said to be the oldest church doorway in Buckinghamshire.

The 'chantry-chapel' on the north-eastern corner of the church was built in 1542 by William, the second Lord Windsor. The timing of its building was unfortunate because within five years all chantries were suppressed - so William's soul would not have been prayed for as long as he might have hoped. His purpose in building the chantry may have been more philanthropic however since the chantry priests commonly provided education for poor local children. The actions of Henry VIII and Edward VI in this respect proved to be a major educational blow nationally, - and Bradenham was probably one of the casualties.



Once one has recovered from the glory of the south doorway and enters the church, one of the first things that becomes apparent is the wooden rood loft and the chancel screen with its locked gates. This unusual facility permits the church to be open for viewing and use, whilst at the same time protecting it against the ever-present vandals. The screen was installed in 1927 having been purchased by a Mrs Temple (of next door Bradenham Manor).



The manor dates from c.1650 but it ‘evolved’ from an older building which was bought by Andrew Windsor in c.1510. Queen Elizabeth I visited in 1556 whilst on her way home from Oxford; Isaac Disraeli (father of Benjamin) lived here as a tenant from 1829 until he died in 1848. The building is now used as a training college and is not open to the public.



It always gives me pleasure to see some sort of image of Botolph in one of his churches, - whether the image be a wooden or stone sculpture, a painting, icon or stained glass window. In Bradenham’s case I was spoilt because, as well as the lunette over the south door, there is a wonderful stained glass window on the south side of the chancel. As is traditional, Botolph is depicted holding the Abbey of Icanho. The adjacent window portrays King Ethelmund of ...? ... ah well that is still subject to debate and I shall be discussing him in a later issue. Suffice it to say for the moment that it was he who was recorded as having given land for Botolph to build an abbey. Pictures of Ethelmund are few and far between so this one is a special joy. In the tower there is a beautifully-written script outlining the church’s history and mentioning this window. Here, the king’s name is erroneously recorded as ‘Helmund’.



When looking at the window I could see how this occurred because, due to the spacing, the words can be read as ‘King et Helmund’. It occurs to me that D.G.Smith, the 1952 calligrapher might not have been the first to make this mistake and it may point to the reason why any historical information about King Ethelmund has been so elusive. Perhaps we should start looking for a King *Helmund*?



On the top of the rood loft there some figurines. Could that one be Botolph? From down below it certainly looked as if he might have a church in his hand, but it was in shadow. In my enthusiasm for all-things-Botolph, I was initially fooled.



Even with the greatest licence, Botolph would not be thus positioned (six centuries before his time) with Mary and Jesus. On taking a close look at the photograph I saw that he was holding, not an abbey, but a book. The figure was that of John. Maybe it was from a St Mary and St John's church that Mrs Temple bought the screen?

Returning to the script, D.G.Smith tells us that the Domesday Book records that two Saxons, 'Suating and Herding hold Bradenham of the King and are taxed for two hides of land ...' and that 'Suating could have built the church, the old Saxon door being part of it. Up to 1863 the church was mainly Norman architecture with a rounded Chancel arch and round-headed windows. In 1863 the church was restored by G.E.Street - the Norman work was taken away and replaced by the present Gothic work'.

I believe I detect some ruefulness in this comment. It strikes me that the community are grateful for their beautiful well-maintained building which, without G.E.Street's diligence, might by now have fallen into ruins. I feel that there is some sadness however, that the restoration involved so much loss of apparent pedigree.

Much of what we see now is comparatively modern, - the porch, many of the outside buttresses, the chancel and even the font are all nineteenth century. But the heart that beats within this church is still ancient and is exemplified by the three bells, the eldest of which dates from c.1300 and bears the inscription *Michael de Wymbis me Fecit*'. Under a rug by the south side of the altar rails is a C16 monumental brass. The woodwork of the chancel aumbry and the bishop's chair are also very old and the church has a crypt

and in this following picture the crypt vent is visible below the left-hand window.



Items of interest:

1. *The Saxon/Norman south doorway.*
2. *The Lunette.*
3. *The Rood Screen with its carvings above.*
4. *The stained glass window in the south wall of the chancel depicting King Ethelmund and Saint Botolph.*
5. *The C16 monumental brass in memory of Richard Redberd.*



6. *The aumbry.*
7. *The C16 Chantry Chapel (now used as a vestry).*
8. *The Lychgate erected in 1920 which doubles as a village war memorial to commemorate the fallen of the First World War.*

Relevance of the church to Botolph's life:

The church is set in an ancient area. Bronze Age barrows lie to the north of the village and there is evidence of both Iron Age and Roman habitation. One of England's six or seven Grim's Ditches (Iron Age boundary markers) runs from

Bradenham in an arc to the northeast where its bank is joined by and forms part of the ancient Ridgeway/Icknield trackway. This, as we have seen in an earlier issue, passes close by the church of Saint Botolph's Swyncombe before heading in the Bradenham direction and then on towards the iron quarries of East Anglia. Significantly there is evidence of iron smelting having been carried out in Bradenham and it is likely that the iron ore was carried here via the Icknield Way.

There is no specific evidence of Botolph's presence in Bradenham. However we are told in his 'Epitome of a Vita' found in the Schleswig Breviary that, having spent some time in one location, he was given '*a more suitable place on the river Thames in which the man of God built a church in honour of St Martin*'.

The identification of this site is not helped by the fact that the River Thames is 215 miles long and no information is given regarding whether the 'place' was in the upper or lower reaches. However, we cannot exclude the 'Wye-Combe' reach of this part of the Thames as Botolph's mission site. Although the Botolph Churches of Bradenham, Swyncombe, Aspley Guise and Shenley do form a cluster in this area, I am not convinced that they are Type A i.e. founded directly by Botolph or his acolytes. I think it is far more likely that they are all Type B late Anglo-Saxon foundations built as a response to the religious needs of travellers.

Thanks: Many thanks once again to Revd Nigel Lacey for his friendship and for showing me round the church at short notice.

Readers' Letters and Emails

1. Jean Stone kindly praised the pictures of Grimston church's wood carvings and suggested that those who found such things interesting might like to look at other carvings to be found in the village church in Old Warden, Bedfordshire.

2. Emma Rose Barber is researching C14 Psalters and mentioned her surprise that Saint Botolph has not featured more in her investigations. She posed four interesting questions which I have promised to answer but want to do so in detail, - so Emma Rose you have not been forgotten - I shall reply shortly!

3. I have received emails of support and encouragement from Father Pachomius, Jane Davies, Roger Joyce, Derek Cummings and Joe Bain, - all of which were much appreciated - many thanks.

4. Roger Howlett wrote from the St Botolph's Club in Massachusetts telling me of a wonderful talk they had from Prof. Robin Fleming from Boston College whose researches into Post-Roman Britain have touched closely on the activities of our saint. I am hoping that I will be able to obtain Professor Fleming's permission to reproduce some of her talk in a future newsletter.

5. Patricia Croxton-Smith wrote with a valid suggestion that the reason that many Botolph Churches are a mile or two away from the old tracks might be because it made them less obvious to Viking raiders.

6. John Sennett writes from Swyncombe asking for advice on how he should set about tracing evidence of the original consecration of his church. (Ideas please). He also offers the information that Swyncombe is thought to be a Pilgrim Church (possibly twixt Winchester and St Albans/Bury St Edmunds) and that there is evidence of a Saxon settlement nearby, together with an undated monastery. His contact details are johsennett@aol.com or <http://www.st-botolphs-swyncombe.info/>.

Membership of SOSB

I am delighted to welcome the following new members:-

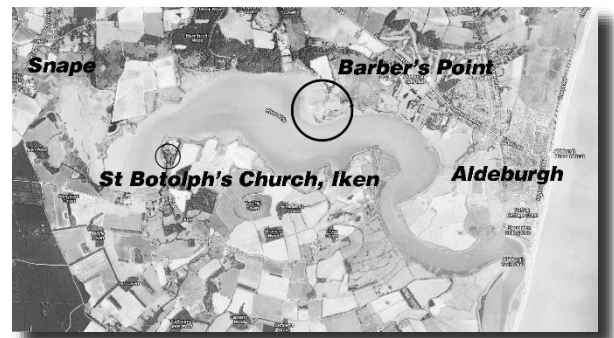
John and Judy Prescott.

I am indebted to Robert Beavis for providing the following interesting article.

The Dig at Barber's Point, by R.C.Beavis.

(Edited by Denis Pepper for inclusion in The Botolphian)

Barber's Point is a barren and windswept promontory on the River Alde, home now to sheep, grass and wetland birds. It is hard to believe that, 1300 years ago, it was a significant settlement and cemetery along the banks of one of Anglo-Saxon East Anglia's major arteries of travel. To the east is Aldeburgh, to the west are Iken, Snape, Rendlesham and, most famously, Sutton Hoo.



On the final day of this year's dig, the last to be held at Barber's Point, a fire pit containing prehistoric pottery, tentatively dated to the Neolithic period, was discovered, taking the history of this corner of Suffolk back to 3000BC or earlier. Later, in the first and second centuries AD, it was a site of Roman salt production. The Roman greyware and briquetage – the coarse ceramic used to make evaporation pans – that litters the site in a layer about 40cm thick, date from this period, as do a bronze brooch and a beautiful bronze dolphin. There is little distinctive Samian ware at Barber's Point, and so it was probably a low-status industrial site, and not a villa or settlement.

It was the unexpected Middle Saxon graveyard that brought the amateurs and professionals back a further three times, and generated much excitement in the local press and the local archaeological community. This year, a total of five further graves of children and young adults, one showing signs possible signs of trepanation, were uncovered, and it is now believed that the boundaries of the settlement and graveyard have been uncovered.

Radiocarbon dating of graves from previous excavations has suggested a date of 650-715 for the cemetery, a period whose significance in the conversion of East Anglia can barely be understated. All the graves were aligned east-west, and contained no or few grave goods, indicating probable Christian burials. There were no warriors at Barber's Point, no shields, swords and spears. Grave goods change in the Middle Saxon period, as the coming of Christianity changed, albeit slowly, the society it encountered. The age of the great warriors of the ship burial at Sutton Hoo and its lesser-known cousin, Snape, was coming to an end. The choice of items interred in graves reflects this. Grave goods become less warlike and, it is true, less common, but that is not to say that people gave up on them entirely. Old habits die hard, and the parents and grandparents of the teenage girl buried with a box of mementos – treasures and precious things collected in childhood, perhaps – had clearly not moved on completely from the ways of their own formative years.

The grave with the 'box of treasures' was by far the most intriguing of the features at Barber's Point. The nails in the casket, placed by the feet of the body, had oxidised, effectively pickling fragments of wood and of the cloth used to make the dead girl's burial shroud. In the box were a piece of glass, a smooth stone with a hole such as any child might pick up on Aldeburgh beach today, a spindle whorl, some pieces of what seem to be a Roman bridle, and a cowrie shell. The

conversion of Britain, then, was not swift or immediate. Historians such as Barbara Yorke and John Blair have pointed out that, to a pantheist, accepting one more deity over all the others would not have presented any great challenge. Even if they accepted fully the Christian God, the early converts' understanding of their new faith was clearly not as complete as it could have been.

Connections with Saint Botolph.

Perhaps more interestingly, however, are the possible connections with St Botolph. The River Alde was one of the motorways of Anglo-Saxon East Anglia. The site was packed full of oyster shell, reminding us that the river is a source of food, and it is clear that rivers have been routes of trade and exchange for thousands of years. The nearby Deben, for example, was navigable throughout the mediaeval period as far as Debenham where local Saxon monarchs and warlords held court. But rivers had a more sinister aspect: littoral creeks and marshes were inhabited, so the locals believed, by demons. Indeed, much of our East-Anglian folklore is related to watercourses. Black Shuck, the great hellhound, has a name derived from "scucca," an Anglo-Saxon word for a watercourse. At Burgh, where St Botolph's relics were taken to lay a demon, there are many tales of the Galley Trot, another great, black dog – "galley" here being related to "gully." Even the Grendel, the beast killed by Beowulf, lived in a marsh and has a name derived, ultimately, from another Old English word for a watercourse. It was these legends that may have attracted St Botolph, the great exorcist, to found his minster at Iken, directly across the water from Barber's Point. The later parish church is clearly visible from the dig site.

The early minsters, as well as providing a wilderness into which the British Isles' monks, inspired by the Desert Fathers, could retreat, served as missionary outposts. Priests would be sent forth to preach and to establish satellite churches in the local area. Parishes with resident priests were set up later, when the journey from the minster and back again was too great to be undertaken in one day. It seems likely that Barber's Point was such a site. It is too romantic to say with any degree of certainty that the posthole structure found in the south-eastern corner of the excavations, as close to the graves as a building could possibly be, was an early church, but it is not impossible. Nor is it impossible that St Botolph, the early English monastic who was visited by Bede's own spiritual father, St Ceolfrith, for instruction in the monastic life, had links with this community. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle tells us that he founded his monastery

in 654. As has been noted earlier, the graves here date from 650-715. We can never know for sure that one of our greatest pre-Schism saints visited Barber's Point, but it is a tantalising prospect. Indeed, given the role played by minsters such as his, and the closeness of this settlement and cemetery to his monastery, it is probable.

Acknowledgements:

The author wishes to thank Sam Newton and Jez Meredith for their various helpful comments on-site, without which he could not have completed this article, Rik Hoggett for an enlightening talk on conversion-period East Anglia given at Barber's Point, David Rea for taking such excellent photographs, and the Aldeburgh and District Local History Society for providing the opportunity to work on such a fascinating site. All photographs © David Rea and ADLHS 2013, reproduced with permission. (Ed: Sadly, for brevity I had to exclude the photographs but they, together with the unedited version of this article, are available at our website: www.Botolph.info).

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Regular Endnotes

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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 a contraction of '*Botolph's Town*.'

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Folkestone, Kent. 1st May 2013.