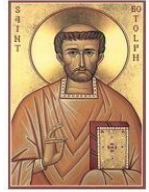




# The Botolphian

Newsletter of  
The Society of Saint Botolph

[www.botolph.info](http://www.botolph.info)



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President: Revd Timothy L'Estrange, Vicar of St.Gabriel's Church, North Acton.

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1st February 2016

## Highlights this month

- St Botolph's church, Tottenhill, Norfolk.
- Welcome to new members: Bill Flavell (Folkestone), Beatrice Auger (Folkestone), Canon Stuart Morris (Tottenhill). Email addresses now stand at 283 and (re-audited) membership at 356.
- Emails from Patricia Croxton-Smith, Joe Bain, Colin Nicholson and Duncan Hopkin.

## Editorial

Please note that the date of the Luncheon this year will be **Wednesday 12 October**. It was originally planned for the following day but Thursdays are inconvenient for several people. You will observe that the new date still avoids 'Golfers' Tuesdays'! Please reserve the date in your diaries. If you have not joined us before then make sure to come this time - you will be certain of receiving a warm welcome. The event will, once again, be in Cambridge but I am not yet sure of the exact venue. Any suggestions regarding venue or speaker/visits will be gratefully received.

## Church Feature

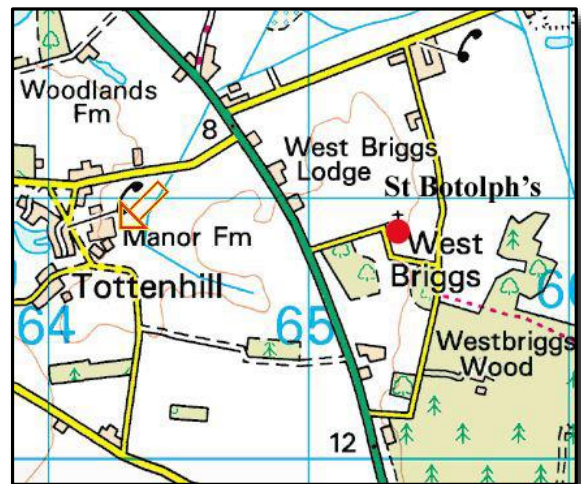
# T

## ottenhill (West Briggs),

Norfolk.

**Approach:** Coming from the south take the A10 towards King's Lynn but, at Downham Market turn right along the A1122 Downham Road for 2.5 miles and then turn left along the A134(A10) - also towards King's Lynn. After 3.6 miles turn right

along Church Lane and 300 metres later you will find the church. If coming from King's Lynn, take the A10 and turn left on the A134. After 1 mile, you will find Church Lane on your left. There is room to park immediately outside.



**Key:** The church is normally kept locked so contact Canon Morris as below.

**Vicar:** (Associate Rector) Canon Stuart Morris, 6 Rectory Lane, Watlington, King's Lynn, PE33 0HU, Tel: 01553 811-487.

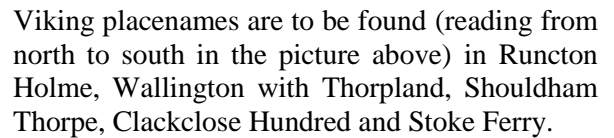
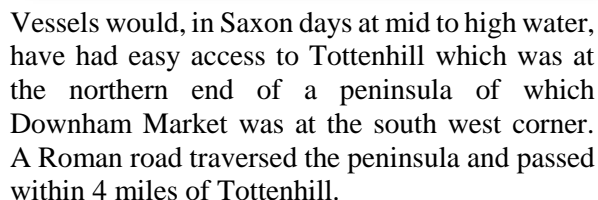
**Church services:** Every second Sunday at 9.30 a.m. for 45 minutes.

**Location:** Church Lane, West Briggs, Norfolk, PE33 0RR; 52.67056, 0.443476; TF653108.

**Listed Grade: I.**

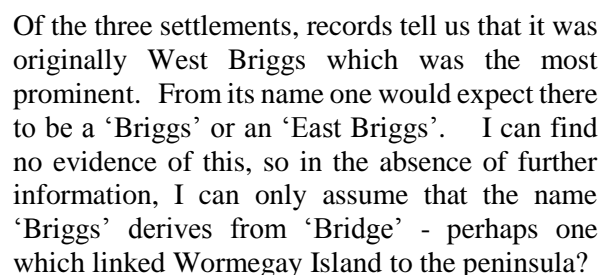


Topographically speaking, Tottenham lies on higher ground at the eastern edge of what would in Saxon times have been a shallow water/marsh which we might call the 'Ouse Basin' since it is even now the catchment for water which drains into the River Ouse. Tottenham lies 9 miles south of King's Lynn and 5 miles east of the Great Ouse River.



St Botolph's church is then exactly where we have become used to seeing them - on the lower slopes close to the water's edge with easy access to a Roman road. Is this a formula for Botolph's churches of Saxon origin? Indeed is it a formula for the origin of *all* Saxon churches? And what parts do the Vikings play - if any? Once again we see here evidence of neighbouring Viking sites surrounding, but remaining shy, of our church.

The name of the neighbouring village of Wormegay is said to derive from *Wrms's People*. The area has yielded evidence of early settlement with finds dating back to 3,000 B.C. There is evidence that the Saxon period saw a further influx resulting in a denser population and a subsequent cemetery. The Domesday Book records churches being present both at West Briggs and Wormegay. The castle (described as a 'fine medieval motte and bailey built in Norman times') was constructed to control the causeway between Wormegay and West Briggs. 1 km to the northwest stood a small C12 Augustinian Priory which was dissolved in 1537.



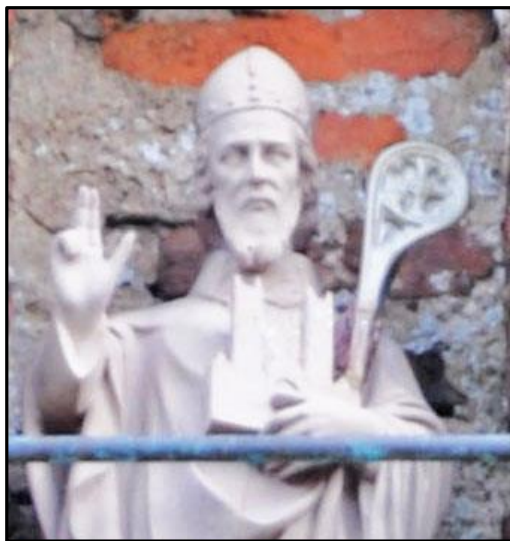
West Briggs' population gradually declined and although Tottenhill gained in prominence its church fell into ruins. The inhabitants therefore



adopted the old West Briggs church which is now properly called St Botolph's Church, Tottenhill. We approach the church from the west and are greeted by the C14 three stage carrstone tower with Decorated-style windows. Carrstone (sometimes called Gingerbread Stone) is a locally-mined coarse hard sandstone - often containing iron oxide which causes its characteristic brown shade.



Two thirds of the way up the tower is a niche in which stands the effigy of a bishop (or abbot). The fact that this effigy is holding the model of a church tells us that he was a builder - but clearly not the builder of St Botolphs but of the twin-towered structure which he holds before him.



The effigy looks unweathered and must be comparatively modern. I can find no information

about it but the building he is holding is a similar shape to that of the minster of St Margaret's at King's Lynn.



The arch surmounting the C12 Norman doorway features zigzags supported on herringbone imposts.



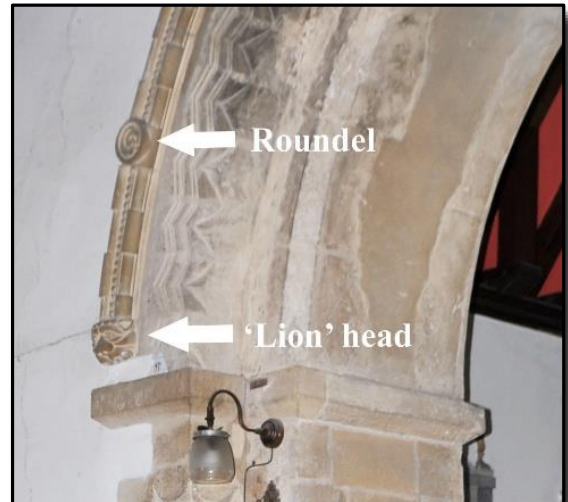
In the tympanum is a stone cross enclosed within a carved rope circle.





The octagonal font is thought to date from C17.

This however received some restoration in 1877 when an outer arch was added.



This outer arch has a billet pattern of roundels and terminates with 'leonine-style' heads.



The C12 Nave is the earliest part of the building and the fineness of south door mentioned above is reflected again in the structure of the chancel arch.

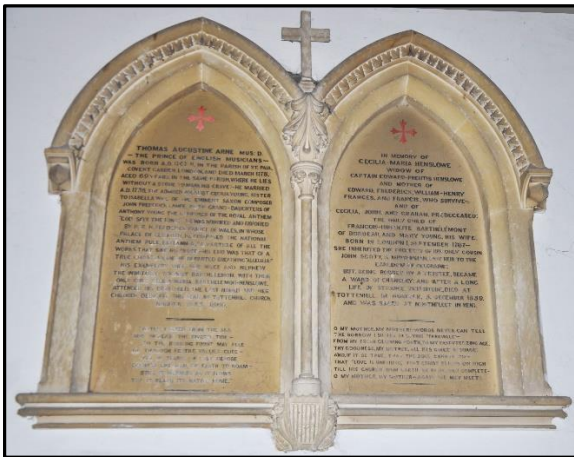


The chancel was restored in 1864 when the east wall was rebuilt but the early C14 window was retained.





The piscina seems to be a C19 fabrication but (presumably) set into the recess of a similar original structure.



On the south wall of the chancel is a memorial to Thomas Arne - the 'Prince of Musicians' and composer of 'Rule Britannia.' Although Arne lived at Covent Garden this memorial was erected by relatives who lived in Tottenhill.

They combined the memorial with another to their matriarch Cecelia-Maria Henslowe who was 'robbed by a trustee, became a ward of chancery and after a long life of strange vicissitude died at Tottenhill and was buried at Northfleet.' (where, incidentally, there is another St Botolph's Church but I guess that is irrelevant!).



From the exterior, the South Porch dates from C17 and the south wall of the nave is covered with a functional but unattractive rendering.



The south wall of the chancel is a hotchpotch of stone. The fabric of the new east wall can be seen rounding the corner to merge with its southern counterpart of earlier origin. The date of 1804 on the drainage hopper (ringed) rather belies the date of 1864 which is held as the period when the chancel was restored; perhaps the drains were replaced first (just before the Battle of Trafalgar!) and the rest of the work was done later?





Above is seen a mixture of interesting structures on the north wall of the nave. Pevsner related that there was a Roman quernstone built into the north wall of the chancel but I was unable to locate this with any confidence.



The upper arrow in the picture above indicates the run of the arched stone course over the original Norman door. The lower arrow shows the region of Saxon long and short work.



The west wall of the South Porch bears a plaque to the memory of Ann Mary **Butter** who died in 1849 and her husband Thomas Butter who died in 1867. This is interesting because 'Butter' is a name which is often corrupted to and from 'Botolph'. In old maps of Romney Marsh, for

example, 'Botolph's Bridge' is found to have been written 'Butter's Bridge.' One wonders whether this Thomas might have acquired his name from his ancestors' association with the church i.e. 'Thomas Butter' deriving from 'Thomas of Botolphs.'



Only 12 miles to the southeast lies another Botolph church in the village of Shingham. This also bears a plaque in a prominent position (west wall again) as arrowed above.



This plaque bears a dedication to the memory of another 'Butter' - Richard, the son of Will and Frances **Butters**. Perhaps 'Butters' was just a common name in this area rather than being particularly associated with Botolph churches?





Returning to the Tottenhill church, we find, on the north wall of the tower ...



... two rings provided for visitors in order that they might tie up their horses!

The tower now contains only one bell (dated 1842) although there is a record that on St Valentine's Day 1642 an earlier bell was stolen. Legend tells us that the robbers hid their booty under what is now known as 'Thieves' Bridge.' The villains were caught and hanged.

#### **Classification of the site.**

The first rector of this church was installed in 1190 so there is no doubt of its early provenance. The 'long and short work' at the base of the blocked Norman north doorway suggests that this was one of the many churches which were Saxon in origin but redesigned and rebuilt by the Normans to suit their taste.

The toponymical evidence of long-term Viking settlements nearby makes one wonder if they also might have had a hand in restoring/maintaining an original Saxon structure - perhaps after they had plundered it first?

The Tottenhill site is well-ensconced in Saint Botolph's 'homeland' of East Anglia so, bearing in mind his missionary propensity and his access to a large number of missionary monks, it is logical to suspect that this site was either developed during Botolph's lifetime (i.e. Class A) or developed as a result of his work being carried on after his death (Class B(i) or (ii)).

Simply because a church site was founded by monks from Botolph's Abbey does not of course guarantee that the church would be dedicated to Saint Botolph. History does not divulge exactly when dedications started. Many churches might originally have been known for many years simply by the name of the village in which they were situated. Those that subsequently became routinely frequented by travellers might then 'after the fact' have been dedicated to Saint Botolph acknowledging that he was believed to have a special interest in wayfarers.

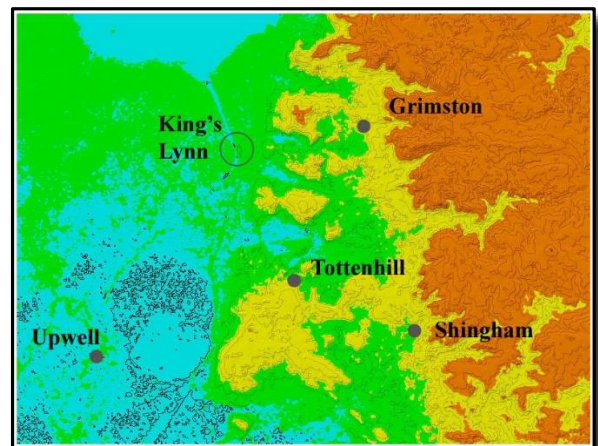
Thus we may have ended up with one group of church sites which have been founded by missionaries or villagers who had absolutely no

connection with Saint Botolph and yet, because of the churches' positions relative to the world of travel, have become dedicated to him ... and another group of sites which are dedicated to him because he is directly associated with them by legend.

This brings us to the question of whether Icanho Abbey would have specialised in building their churches and field chapels (assuming that they did such things) on 'travellers' routes.

Whilst control rested with Botolph himself one might assume that he simply built where he saw a need. Later, when abbeys became more money-orientated, they perhaps chose to place their 'Medieval Motels' on the sites which would be most profitable and then erect their 'Saint Botolph' signs to reinforce the idea that this was a place where you would be sure of a blessing for a safe journey.

And which was Tottenhill? I believe the site dates from pre-Conquest times before the port of King's Lynn was relevant. Continental trade would have passed through Tottenhill on its way to the Roman road and onward distribution. The church might have been built by Botolph monks but just as easily by other institutions. It looks to me as if in this case the church was built because it was needed here and it was its position on a trade route that decreed it should be dedicated to St Botolph as a Travellers' Church. I would therefore opt for B(i) (before AD 800).



**Footnote:** from the map above it can be seen that all the Saint Botolph churches in this area lie on the old Saxon coast and so each would have been accessible to trading vessels and therefore qualify to be labelled as a 'travellers' church.' The Upwell church and King's Lynn still lie 'in the mud' awaiting the subsequent land reclamation.

#### **Thanks**

My thanks to Father James Nolan who kindly opened the church for us when we visited in November 2014. My further thanks to Canon Stuart Morris (who a year ago took over as

Associate Rector) for helping to clarify the 'Google confusion' between the Tottenhill and Wormegay churches.

### Readers' letters and emails.

1. I received many New Year Greetings for which of course I have thanked the writers individually.
2. Patricia Croxton-Smith wrote: 'I suspect Botolph was ousted by St. Christopher as the Normans did not like Saxon saints, suspecting they might become a focus for disaffection e.g. as at Ely.' After my query about this she replied: 'The Normans had endless trouble with Ely (with a major fenland revolt), always associated with St. Etheldreda.' She also reminded me that Hadstock church 'has mostly been in the monarch's hands and ... is still royal.'
3. Joe Bain kindly invited me to give a talk at the St Botolph Club in Boston Massachusetts and I am hoping this might be possible in 2017.
4. Colin Nicholson wrote regarding the Hymn Tune 'St Botolph': I requested that hymn and tune when we were making arrangements for BBC Songs of Praise to be broadcast from St. Botolph's Colchester, where, as you know well, I am organist. They seemed somewhat surprised at the choice, not realising the name of the tune until I explained. The names of Hymn tunes can provide fascinating study and have helped many a choir member through a lengthy sermon!
5. Duncan Hopkin sent me the following observations about droving:

Much of this cattle and sheep 'traffic' came all the way from Scotland (islands and mainland) to the great markets south of the border (eg Carmel in Cumbria and further into Yorkshire and the Midlands) and would have taken many weeks to make the journey.

In this day and age it is difficult to imagine the amount of animal traffic on these routes and the essential role that the churches and rest houses would have played.

The Yorkshire Fairs were very important: Wensley, Settle (the market still exists) and Grassington started in the 1200's encouraged by lords of the manor and monastic houses for the toll income they earned from merchants and farmers/drovers.

Bolton Abbey held an annual fair in Appletreewick which became a Droving Fair in the 17<sup>th</sup> century where Scottish cattle and sheep were sold to local farmers.

At the same time, Scottish cattle and sheep were sold at the big Droving Fair at Great Close near Malham Tarn.

This regular trade in Scottish beasts continued for several centuries with thousands of cattle being traded at the bigger fairs. The beasts would have been skinny after their long trek and most were sold to local graziers for fattening and onward sale.

Interestingly, the wealthier graziers became bankers of a sort, as money in the shape of cattle and sheep was harder to steal. Some even issued their own pseudo bank notes!

### Endnotes

Please do not hesitate to write to me or send an email to [botolph@virginmedia.com](mailto: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](mailto: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.