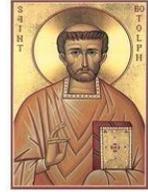




# The Botolphian

Newsletter of  
The Society of Saint Botolph

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



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1st September 2013

## Highlights this month

- St. Botolph's Church, Skidbrooke.
- Letters from *Revd Diane Gardiner, Peter Van Demark and Aaron Friar.*
- Saint Botolph's entry into monastic life.
- We still have space for you to attend the first Annual Luncheon on 9th October.

## Editorial.

Having had cause to send recently that sad email about the vandalism to St. Botolph's Skidbrooke, I felt that it was appropriate to feature that very same church this month. You will recall that I attached two photographs to the email, one of which showed the church's isolation. I have not duplicated that one here but I mention it in case you want to have another glance at it after reading this article.

## Church Feature

### **S**kidbrooke (Saltfleetby).

**Approach:** *As you head towards Saltfleetby (probably from Louth) you will see Skidbrooke church on the 'horizon' but do not be fooled into thinking that you can drive straight to it, - still use the map, because roads in this area curve subtly and do not always lead you where you want to go!*

**Key:** *The church is always open!*

**Contact:** *Guy Williams, The Grange, Saddleback Road, Skidbrooke, Louth N11 7DH. ([www.Skidbrookecyder.com](http://www.Skidbrookecyder.com)).*

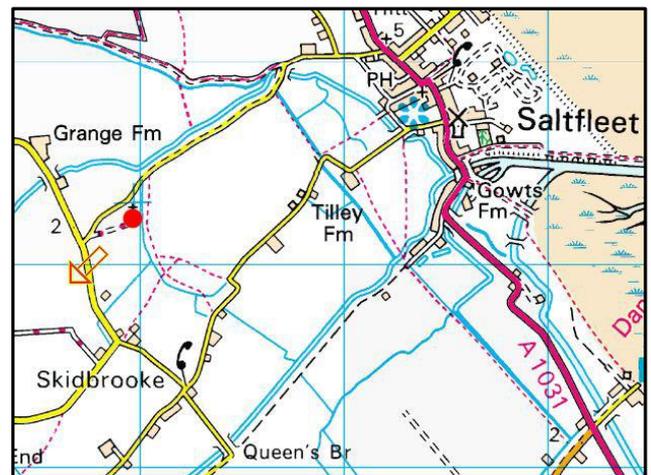
*Tel: 01507 339-368. [53.4102, 0.1619]. (Producer of excellent cider, mead AND St. Botolph's Apple Juice! - Ed.).*

**Location:** *53.4152, 0.1650, LN11.*

**Listed Grade:** **I.**



These maps hint at the remoteness of the church but there are, surprisingly, several other churches close by, one of which is Skidbrooke's sister church of All Saints which is less than 4 miles away (to the south) at Theddlethorpe.



I first visited Skidbrooke in March 2011 and our arrival was rather later than I intended so dusk was falling and the barrier had been lowered across the entrance track. *Nil desperandum* I parked the car by the barrier; Zina chose to remain

there while I hurried down the track to the church to use what little daylight there was to take some



photographs. All seemed deserted and yet when I was still 50 yards or so away I thought I detected a movement in the shadows beneath the lych gate. As I came closer, a shape materialised into a strange figure in colourful 'Hollandish' clothing. This turned out to be Graham, - a young man who was, as they say, 'on the road'. I would have liked to have returned the following day with a few provisions for him but I ran out of time and the swirling fog that accompanied us back to Legbourne had, by the following day, turned into a discouraging fine rainy drizzle.

Sadly Graham was not the re-incarnation of Saint Botolph (if he had been I could have asked questions that would have saved me a lot of research) but he *was*, for some obscure reason, very knowledgeable about St. Cedd.



St. Botolph's church Skidbrooke, like nine others in the Louth area, is under the care of the Churches Conservation Trust which is a national charity involved in looking after some 340 or so beautiful and historic English churches which are no longer needed for regular worship. It is thanks to the efforts of the local friends groups that the

churchyards are kept in such good order. The church was made redundant in about 1960 and its care was taken over by the CCT in 1975.



Before looking at the historic details of the church itself I think it is worth considering what factors resulted in this and other local churches being made redundant after so many years of serving local communities.

One is tempted to assume that the cause was depopulation; that many of the former residents went to live in the big cities. On examination however we can see that this is not entirely the case.

The village (also known as Skidbrooke cum Saltfleet) was recorded in the Domesday Book as 'Schitebroc' when it had 33 households, which would have meant perhaps 200 or so inhabitants. In 1801 the population was 298 and has since never been more than double that.

It is *between* those two dates, i.e. 1086 and 1801 that is the area of interest. What happened?

[Guy Williams has given us a clue by kindly supplying this piece of specialist information:

*"Between Domesday and 1500 would have been Skidbrooke's heyday when it was the third largest tax paying community in Lincolnshire after Lincoln and Boston. It was a free port in the medieval period and only died completely with the opening of the Louth Navigation (1770 Ed).*

*The buildings were nearly all mud and stud constructions (a form of building unique to this part of Lincolnshire and Jamestown Virginia - because the carpenter who went with John Smith to found Jamestown came from Alford and so mud and stud was the only way he knew to build houses).*

*Although many "hut stands" and streets can be seen in some of the pasture fields, nothing remains of the houses which is why the church stands in such splendid isolation."*]

It appears therefore that, although the number of village inhabitants does not appear to have fallen according to the easily-available records that I accessed, there must have been quite a massive surge around about C13 and it was that, no doubt, which caused the church to be built in the first place. One might guess at a population of 1,000 or more.

It was soon after that when the Black Death started to take its toll and reduced the English population by about a third. Did the same thing happen in these Lincolnshire fens or were they healthier places in which to live? The plague continued after 1500 so maybe its severest effect came later here.

This takes us close to 1620 when the Pilgrim Fathers left for what became the U.S.A. I hate to make our American Cousins feel guilty but perhaps the reason that the church has been made redundant is that the descendants of Skidbrooke's congregation are now living in Boston Massachusetts?

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St. Botolph's, Skidbrooke is basically a 13th century church with additions and repairs that started to be carried out soon after its first hundred years. The layout consists of a clerestoried central nave with north and south aisles. There is a west tower, a C13 chancel and a south porch. There floor is now earthen but some tiles remain in the chancel.

The building is unusual since although it is mainly made of limestone, red brick repairs and additions were made in C14. The materials for this are likely to have come from one of the earliest centres of brick making which was in nearby Hull.

Incidentally, when I met Graham, I had no idea that there had been claims of a high level of paranormal activity at the site. All I can say is that neither I (nor my wife Zina with whom I visited again at a later date) felt anything abnormal about the place.

**Foundation of the site:** *Norman.*

**Relevance of the church to Botolph's life:** *Neighbouring churches are dedicated to: All Saints, St. Peter, St. Bartholomew, and St. Mary so I guess that it was just St. Botolph's turn. There seems to be no other logical reason for this dedication.*

**Places of Interest in the vicinity:**

There are four Grade II listed structures in Skidbrooke, - the C17 New Inn public house, a

1673 Manor House, the 1770 tower windmill and a Limestone Pump!

### **Focus on Saint Botolph.**

Well, sadly I did not manage to stimulate any controversy as a result of last month's focus which speculated on Botolph's childhood. There were no comments, critical or otherwise.

We move on therefore to 'Oblates and Novitiates'.

It seems that Botolph probably entered monastic life when he was young (in the seventh century a 14-year-old was considered to be mature). He might even have become an oblate well before that age however.

The word 'oblate' comes from the Latin 'oblatus' meaning someone or something that has been offered. Although the term has a different meaning today, it was in common use between the mid sixth and mid seventh centuries to denote a child who had been given by their parents to monastic life; a custom that was very much in vogue at that time.

Some children were given in this way by their parents as a penance. In other circumstances parents might have thought that it was the best way for a bright child to receive an education.

Monasteries were expanding rapidly at the time and new rules were formulated as necessary to bring new stock into the institutions. The calling was a respectable one and many young people and their families would have seen it as an attractive prospect.

We have discussed the suggestion that Botolph was born to noble parents. This may or may not have been the case, but if it were true then there would have been less need for him to have become a monk; he is more likely to have done so of his own volition.

As a 'noble child' perhaps he had to learn the skills and horrors of fighting before he was allowed to enter a monastery.

When this time came he would have entered as a 'postulant' or a 'novitiate' or whatever term was in popular use in those days. There would be a period of acclimatisation to ensure he understood the commitment before he took his first vows.

It seems likely that the monastery in question would have been conforming to the Rules of Saint

Benedict of Nursia who drew them up shortly before his death in the middle of the previous century.

### Readers' Letters and Emails

#### Revd Diana Gardiner from Culpho

"Although this is not strictly about St Botolph I am writing to let you know that Culpho is one of the 'Thankful villages' and, unusually, had no war dead amongst its residents, as a result of World War 1.

*[The map below shows where Culpho is - in case you want to visit. Ed.]*



To remember this and raise funds for the British Royal Legion a group of people from Wales have done a motorcycle run visiting the 51 churches who had lost no-one in WW1.

We had a service of thanksgiving in the church on 31.7.2013 and they brought one of the motorcycles into the church and it was a fun event with noise and laughter. The villages in the Benefice raised some money for this cause and a cheque was handed over after the service.

I attach a couple of photos.



We do not usually get that many people in church for a mid-week service.

Best wishes, Diana."

#### Peter Van Demark (in Boston USA).

"The August newsletter came through just fine. I hope Dr Graham Jones' talk will be available in some form for those who cannot attend. *[Dr Jones has agreed to this in principle and we are going to make a video recording which we hope will be available from the website, - Ed.]*

At <http://petervandemark.smugmug.com/Religion/Boston-St-Botolph-Church-Tour> will be found the pictures I took while touring with Aaron Friar of Boston Pilgrim Tours (new name, <http://bostonpilgrim.org/>) to three St Botolph church sites in the Boston area: the Anglican chapel at the Boston YMCA, the Russian Orthodox Church of the Holy Epiphany in Roslindale, and the Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Brookline.

We will create one or more articles for you in the church visit format you have developed. We may also be able to get in touch with Zoya Shcheglov, who did the icon at the Russian Orthodox Church of the Holy Epiphany.

I will be doing an article for the St Botolph Club newsletter based on my talk in June. Keep up the good work! Peter."

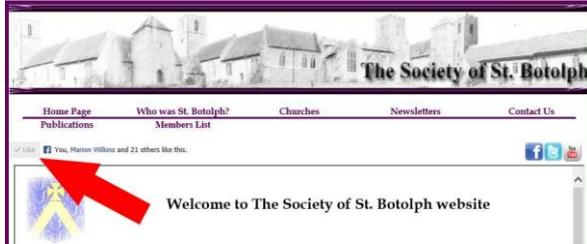
#### Aaron Friar (also Boston USA)

Aaron sent a link which shows some other relevant pictures at:- [Boston Pilgrim Tours](#).

## Membership

Numbers are remaining fairly constant now so from here on I shall devote this section to welcoming new members. Whilst on this subject, could I ask those of you who have not done so, to register on the website <http://botolph.info> and indicate whether or not you will be happy to have your name included on the website members' list.

Angelique also asks me to remind you that by clicking the 'Like' button as show below, you will be helping us greatly with our publicity.



## Welcome to New Members

I am delighted to welcome Eugene Kelly from Boston Massachusetts and George and Joanna Comer from Sevenoaks.

If the above or any other member would care to write a paragraph or so about their interest in Botolph, I would be pleased (perhaps after some editing) to publish it.

## The Society's first Annual Luncheon

will be held on

Wednesday 9th October 2013 at 12.30 for 1pm

**(ONLY ONE MONTH AWAY!)**

at the University Arms Hotel, in Regent Street, Cambridge, CB2 1AD. The cost is £19 per person which includes a two course lunch with tea and coffee. **Tickets are still available** from Denis Pepper at 07802 646-644 or via [botoph@virginmedia.com](mailto:botoph@virginmedia.com).

Dr Graham Jones will be entertaining us after lunch with a talk entitled:-

*'The saint at the gate and the king on the shore: Botolph and his cult over time and space.'*

## 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 thought to be a contraction of '**Botolph's Town.**'

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Folkestone, Kent. 1st May 2013.