

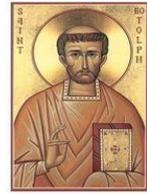


The Botolphian

Newsletter of

The Society of Saint Botolph

www.botolph.info



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Issue Number: 16

1st July 2014.

Highlights this month

- St Botolph's Church, Croxton Kerrial.
- Correspondence and article from Peter Coleman, Boston, Lincs.
- Email from Graham Jones answering most of the questions about Wardley.
- Thanks to Angelique's hard work the map of St Botolph churches on the www.botolph.info website is now working properly again.
- Volume II of my Botolph Trilogy (Brother Botolph and The Abbess) will be launched on **9th August at 11 a.m.** at The Grand Hotel, The Leas, Folkestone where all from SOSB and their friends are invited to join us for 'drinks and nibbles'. For catering purposes please send a short email to botolph@virginmedia.com by 2nd August to let me know you are coming.
- **Please note the change of date of the Annual Luncheon which is now on TUESDAY 14 October 2014 and will be held at the Cambridge City Hotel at 12.30 for 1 p.m.**

Editorial

Whenever I see a 'Bot-' prefix in a village name my hackles always rise a little in the hope that this might be another long-lost Botolph location. As discussed in the February 2014 *Botolphian* regarding the toponymy of Botolph Claydon, the prefix often stems from 'Botyl' being the Anglo-Saxon word for 'building'.

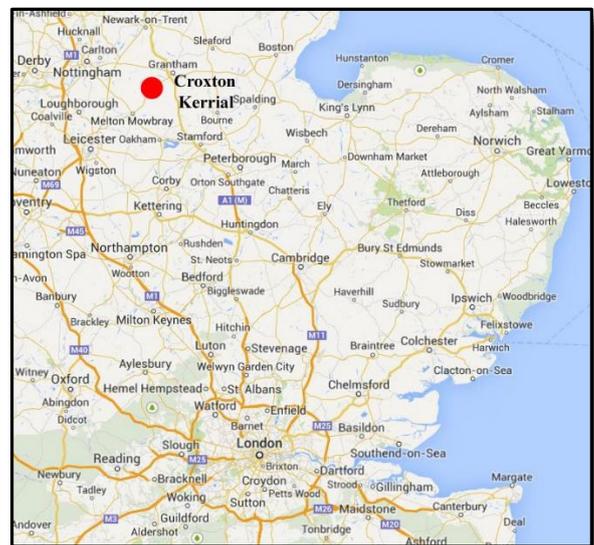
The village of Bottesford lies just north of this month's featured church and I hoped that this might prove to be a corruption of 'Botolph's Ford'. Sadly there seems to be no evidence for this and we must assume once again that the name was derived from Botyl rather than Botolph.

It is an ancient village however, and is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. The name was variously spelt as Bot(t)lesford in 1086, Boteldesford in 1325 and Botulsford in 1358. It stands near Belvoir (pronounced 'Beever') Castle and is on the River Devon (pronounced 'Deevon').

Church Feature

Croxton Kerrial

(pronounced 'Crowson Kerrial') is in north-east Leicestershire, halfway in the 13 miles between Grantham and Melton Mowbray.



Approach:- Take the A604 from Melton Mowbray or Grantham and, when you reach the Saltby/Sproxton (pronounced 'Sprowson') junction turn north into Top Road. After a quarter of a mile (by which time you are in Church Lane) you will find the church on your right hand side. Park on the road immediately outside the church.

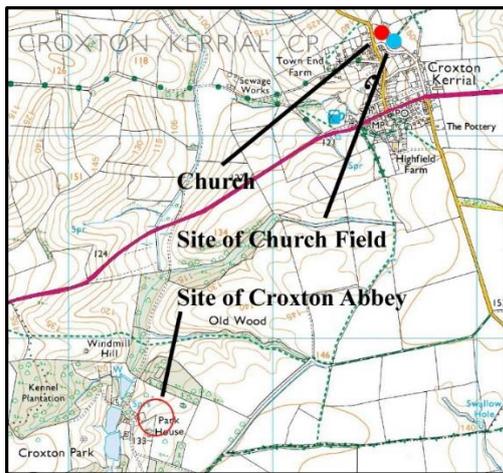
Key: The church is usually open but to be sure of this, telephone the churchwarden, Malda Shipman on 01476 870-258.

Contact: Revd Rowena Bass, High Framland Rectory, 5 Croxton Lane, Harston, Grantham NG32 1PP. Tel: 01476 870-749.

Location: 52.85616, -0.76093. NG32 1PZ.

Listed Grade: II*.

I puzzled for a long while over the derivation of the 'Kerrial' part of Croxton Kerrial's name. I was finally rescued at the eleventh hour by Tony Connolly who is a local resident currently writing a history of the village. It appears that the suffix derives from one, Bertram de Criol who, in 1239, was granted the manor by Henry III and his name has stuck (off and on) with the village ever since.



There is another question however, to which I still do not have an answer. It concerns the dedication of the church. Today it is known as the church of *St Botolph and St John the Baptist*. The noticeboard outside the church however labels it as *St John the Baptist and St Botolph*. On investigating further I discovered that when the church was added to the list of British Listed Buildings in 1968 it was simply recorded as *St John the Baptist*. I hope that a reader will be able explain these changes.

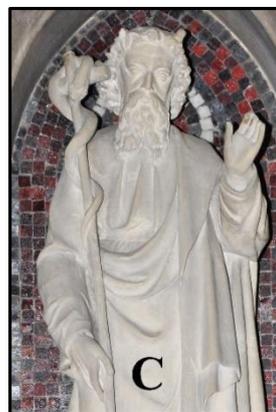


As the visitor approaches the south porch he or she is greeted by a statue over the doorway who would indeed seem to be St John the Baptist; the same

statue is copied as part of the altar screen. An unusual feature of the porch is an exterior stoup situated to the right of the doorway.



But to return to the matter of the statue over the doorway and on the altar screen, - the next question is: "Who are the others on the altar screen, - particularly B?"



We have remarked previously that, after the Reformation, churches sometimes added a 'Biblical' patron to a church dedication in order to give support to a local saint. Croxton Kerrial

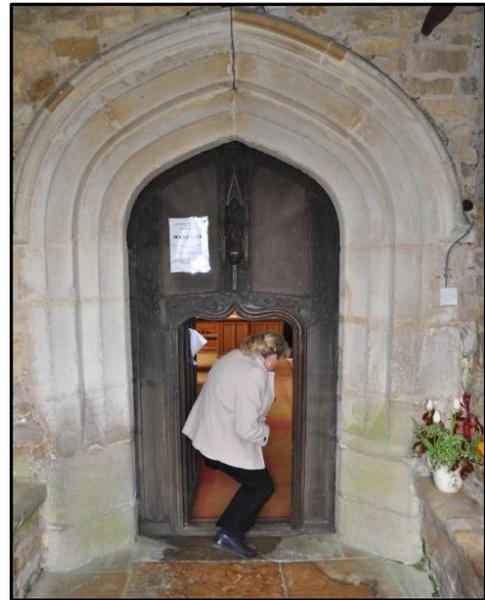
poses a conundrum. Was the church perhaps originally dedicated to St Botolph and was he then supplanted by St John the Baptist for a couple of hundred years before the balance was recently restored in St Botolph's favour?

It is interesting to note the fact that both saints' days are very close together, i.e. 17th and 24th June, - and the summer solstice falls right in the middle of those two days. St John the Baptist shares with the Virgin Mary the privilege of being the only two saints whose *birthdays* (as opposed to '*deathdays*') are celebrated. It is likely that the keeping of St John's Feast Day was popular because it could be nicely substituted for the old pagan festival marking the summer solstice. Last week, on St John's Eve, my son Rob and I were in Khoiladhia (a pretty Peloponnese port which is the home of several giant turtles) when we were alarmed to see an aged Greek setting fire to a straw bale. He then proceeded to encourage all the local youngsters to make a wish and jump through the resulting conflagration.



But back to England and the church of Croxton Kerrial where the church is amongst six in the benefice covered by Revd Rowena Bass. One of her other churches lies at St Branston-by-Belvoir and it is, coincidentally, dedicated to St Guthlac who is regarded by some as being St Botolph's successor in the peripatetic ministerial line.

Rowena told me that she finds the local school very supportive of the church which they use regularly (usually once per term) for their own services. At Easter there were 130 in Rowena's congregation (although normally, if there are 20, she feels that she is doing well).



The Church.

The church is entered through a tiny 'Humility Doorway', which, in itself, is rather fun. I presume the larger door is opened for the more arthritic. Inside there are a number of easy-to-read 'information bats'.



Most of the structure of the building dates from C15 and, like many we visit, was heavily restored in C19. Unusually (for a Botolph church) there is a *central* tower. This is of three stages with a crenellated parapet. At the west end of the church is a three-light ogeed window (i.e. made of two S-shaped mouldings which meet at the top).



With the exception of the chancel (which is ironstone) the church fabric is of limestone. This suggests that the chancel might have been added during the restorations of C19 but at present I can find no record of this. The fine but massive C13 arches which support the central tower are the oldest part of the church.

The 'Information Bats' are a novel way of providing information about the church whilst avoiding the ongoing expense of printing leaflets.

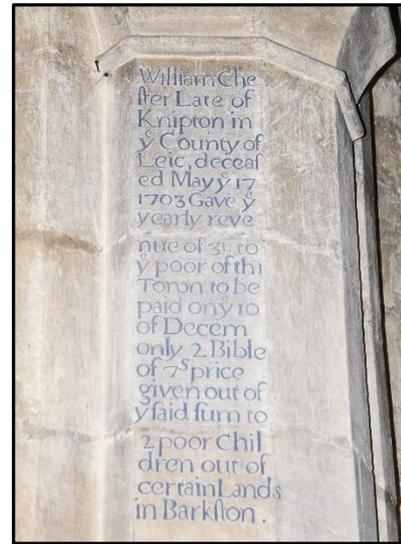
One of these 'bats' gives information about the 42 pews which were donated to the church by the monks of Croxton Abbey when it was dissolved in 1534. The collection of finely carved bench ends is the largest in Leicestershire. One of the carvings depicts two sisters who are said to have been benefactors of the Abbey.



Another explains that, under the Normans, Croxton Kerrial was in the diocese of Lincoln where the cathedral chapter was responsible for daily worship and the provision of music books for the choir. Music was an important part of the church's function.

A third tells how, although organs first came to be used in the great cathedral churches as early as C13, there was mass destruction of these instruments in C16 during the Reformation and then again by Oliver Cromwell in C17. The Restoration saw a revival of organ building but in many of the smaller parishes the music continued to be provided by local instrumentalists. The fine and rare Nicholson organ in Croxton Kerrial was built in 1849 and was restored in 2006.

A fourth 'bat' tells us of the introduction of the 'Poor Law' in 1834 when many new charities were formed, most of which were rooted in religious institutions such as this church. The generous spirit of the Croxton Kerrial villagers is reflected by the number of donations recorded on the pillars.



The church contains a great number of figured corbel ends and headstops of which one of the most spectacular might be this one:-



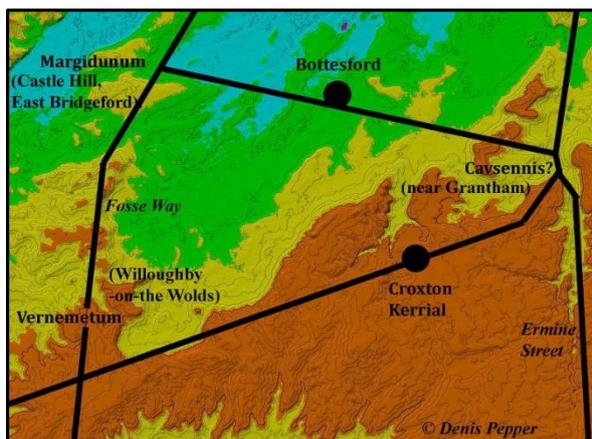
Summary of items of interest:-

1. The tower's crenellated parapet with its 8 crocketed pinnacles.
2. The ogeed west window.
3. The south porch with statue above and stoup on the right.
4. The tiny south 'Humility Door'.
5. The benches with poppyhead carved ends and allegorical figures. Note that the pews were built for the shorter monks of C16; four-inch blocks bring them up to the height needed today.
5. The altar rails (c.1630).
6. The C13 Chancel arch.

7. *Remnants of a fresco on a pillar near the south doorway.*
8. *Pillar gift records of:-*
 - (i) *Mary Ashbourne: to five poor widows or fatherless children on Christmas Day.*
 - (ii) *George Ashbourne: to six poor elderly men.*
 - (iii) *Mary Weston: £10 to the poor of Croxton village.*
 - (iv) *William Chesters: to providing bibles for two poor children.*
 - (v) *Edward Rimmington: to the poor of Croxton on 24th June (i.e. St John the Baptist's Day).*
9. *The 1849 Nicholson Organ.*
10. *The corbel figurines.*

The church's history:-

Like last month's church (Wardley), Croxton Kerrial is on high ground on a Roman road. The latter branches off the Fosse Way south of Vernemetum (Willoughby) and runs through Grantham towards Caysennis (Ancaster or Sapperton). For general interest the map below also shows Bottesford in its marshy location.



Initially I had great difficulty in discovering definitive details of this church's history but, as mentioned earlier, Tony Connolly valiantly helped to fill in the gaps. There are however certain areas where I have had to piece together items of evidence in order to come to my own conclusions. If you dispute any of my comments or have any further information I will be pleased to hear from you.

I noted above that the earliest part of the church is thirteenth century. However there must have been an earlier church on the same site or nearby because the first priest is recorded as being 'Roger, the priest of Croxton' who served from 1110-1118. The Premonstratensian Abbey of Croxton was founded a short distance away (see second map above) in 1156 when it was endowed with the advowsons of Croxton Kerrial church as well as two churches in Derbyshire so the church's

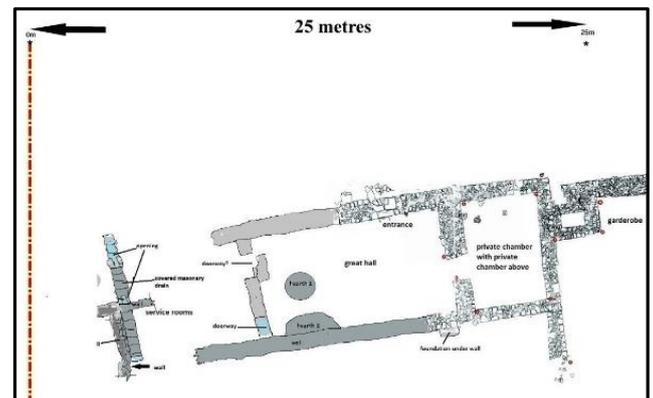
original foundation must have been either Norman or pre-Norman.

In 2012, F.L.A.G. (Framland Local Archaeological Group - the name derives from the title of the wapentake to which Croxton belonged) conducted an excavation in Church Field (shown in blue adjacent to the church on the second map just mentioned) on a building which purported to be a Great Hall with a Private Chamber. The size and shape (shown in the plan below) make me wonder if there is any chance that this could have been the foundations of a precursor Saxon church?

Tony tells me however that the layout is typical of a normal domestic building. I am still holding my breath and waiting to hear thoughts from our readers.

The plan is reproduced with the kind permission of Tony Conolly on FLAG'S behalf. The relevant part of their website is at:-

<http://framlandarchaeology.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/CROXTON-DIG-DRAWING-LATEST-ANNOTATED1.jpg>



Relevance of the church to Botolph's life:

At first sight, it seems unlikely that St Botolph or his acolytes were active in Croxton Kerrial since, as we said last month, this area was right on the edge of his 'patch' and would have come under the auspices of Seaxwulf, Abbot of Peterborough (fl.676).

The zenith of Seaxwulf's career was however twenty years *after* Botolph's. This is a long period if we consider that, in 654 when Botolph founded his abbey of Icanho, the 'New British Christianity' was only 57 years old. Perhaps this 'far-flung outpost' is an indication of the efficiency with which Botolph ran his seminary. It is likely that he acquired more than a hundred apostles and it is quite feasible that they ventured as far afield as Croxton.

So which classification should we apply to Croxton Kerrial? Its lack of mention in the

Domesday Book would suggest that it comes into subdivision (iii) (i.e. founded after the Norman Conquest) but we have already seen that Domesday Book records are not infallible so there is still a chance that it was founded earlier.

The main question really is: 'Was the church dedicated to St Botolph at all in its early days?' One can only speculate but I suspect that the answer is likely to be that this was originally a Travellers' church dedicated to St Botolph and the dedication was lost after the Reformation. If it followed the usual pattern it would have been rededicated to the 'respectable' saint St John the Baptist in C18. Subsequently somebody at sometime has noted its original dedication and St Botolph has become gradually reinstated. I would therefore plump for B(iii), - a Travellers' church founded after the Norman Conquest. But ... What do *you* think?

Readers' Letters and Emails

1. I was delighted to receive this email from one of the society's foremost supporters, Dr Graham Jones FSA St John's College, Oxford, who is a Senior Research Assistant at St Oxford University School of Geography and is the author of *Saints in the Landscape ISBN 9780752441085*. (Ed: He was not expecting this 'plug' but this is a fascinating book which describes the distribution of Churches dedicated to particular Saints in England and Wales). Graham has allowed me to print his email in full:-

Dear Denis, Thanks as always for a splendid Botolphian and for your dogged, diligent and erudite investigations!

I feel sure you are on the right lines in recording the suggestion of a pre-Conquest origin for Wardley church. The quoins are indeed telling, and taken with the likely height of the south wall before the installation of the clerestory and the roofline preserved against the east wall of the tower, would be consistent with an Anglo-Saxon nave. Indeed, a pre-Conquest date is supported by William I's confirmation (broadly accepted as having a genuine basis) that Wardley was given to Westminster Abbey by Edward the Confessor.

Your point about Wardley's probable inclusion in Ridlington for Domesday purposes is again spot-on. As implied by the Confessor's gift, this would make Wardley part of a royal estate, held by the Queen in 1066 as part of the great Rutland endowment of Mercian and English consorts, and by the King in 1086. Also worth noting is Wardley's status as a mother church, with

daughter churches at Belton and (later) Gunthorpe.

You are surely right, too, in identifying the road as an important thoroughfare - though for Roman troop movements the easier route was via the Gartree Road, branching off at the Romano-British settlement at Medbourne. The 'clinch' is Wardley's name - the 'guarding' or 'look-out' clearing (cf. the phrase 'watch-and-ward'): you'll have noticed the steep hill climbing over 300ft up to Wardley from the direction of Leicester. Wardley is also on the county boundary between Rutland and Leicestershire.

On the matter of the dedication, I have a note of St Mary at the time of the gift of the church to Launde Abbey and again in 1754. The larger of the two surviving late medieval bells was christened Thomas. Botolph makes his first appearance somewhere between 1754 and 1846. If Botolph's patronage is more ancient than present evidence allows (and it may be a big 'if'), it would be consistent with my hypothesis that a number of Botolph churches mark defensive points along roads leading to the East Coast and are datable at least to the first half of the eleventh century and perhaps to the period of Cnut's North Sea empire. Interpretation as a church intended for travellers is attractive, but the evidence is perhaps a little weaker.

Thanks again, Denis, for enthusing us!

Best wishes

Graham.

[Ed: Last month I classified Wardley as B (iii) - a Travellers' Church founded after 1066. It now seems likely that a more accurate classification would be C (ii), - i.e. founded between 800 and 1066. Graham's comments lead to many more questions about the deceptively innocent-looking Wardley St Botolphs and it clearly deserves closer study].

2. From Peter Coleman regarding the Tidal Surge at St Botolphs, Boston.

The 5th December 2013 will remain in our minds for a very long time. That is the day when a tidal surge flowed up the river Witham, overflowed its banks and flooded the church and over 400 houses and businesses.

The Church being located only 10 metres from the flood walls was one of the buildings worst affected. The water level was recorded at half a

metre above the 1953 level making it the worst flood the church has suffered in recorded history. The architect's initial estimate of the total cost of the damage to the church is between £500,000 and £1,000,000 some of which will be covered by the church insurance. As far as we know St Botolphs was the only church in the country to be affected by the devastating floods that swept the country late last year.



Since then work has been progressing to both clean up and dry out the building. The church working with the insurance assessor, the cleaning team, the church architect, contractors and volunteers has made great strides in getting the church back to normal. Whilst some of the long term fabric damage is still being assessed, the following has been confirmed:

- Flood water inundated the boiler room located under the church, severely damaging the heating boilers and the pipe work. Because of the damage the complete system will need replacing, including relocating the boilers to a different location to mitigate any future floods. It is expected that this work will take about eighteen months to complete.
- The cafe, shop, offices and toilets were also badly affected and need considerable repairs before they can be re-opened to the public. We are on track to get the repairs completed and have recently reopened the shop and toilets. The cafe is due to follow in the next few weeks.
- The Blenkin Hall was also badly affected and work is currently underway to carry out the repairs and get the hall back to an operational situation.
- The flood has also delayed work on the next phase of the restoration programme. The new stone for restoration of the

Cotton Chapel was submerged in the masons store and work resumed in March.

- Other work that will be needed include a new sound system, and the church putting in place a flood mitigation plan including providing flood gates to the churches seven doors.
- The wooden pew platforms were also badly damaged and will cost over £160,000 to remove and for replacement stone floors to be laid. We cannot hold any major events until this project has been completed as the affected pews have had to be sectioned off for health and safety reasons so restricting seating to 400 instead of 1200. We are investigating sources of funding to pay for this work.

This is a very difficult time for the church: many people are working hard to get this work completed as soon as possible; however it will be sometime before we will be able to get the church fully operational again.

Any donation cheques should be made payable to 'Central Bank St Botolphs Boston' and be sent to;
The Boston Stump Restoration Trust
1 Wormgate, Boston, Lincolnshire, PE21 6NP.

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 Churches:-

- A: C7 churches 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.