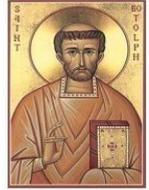




# The Botolphian

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.

Issue Number: 35

1st March 2016

## Highlights this month

- St Botolph's church, Bossall, Yorks.
- Welcome to new members: Hal and Deborah Annett from Canada; Ian Butson from Colchester; Lyn Stilgoe from King's Lynn (both the latter are from the British Sundial Society); Dr Arnaud LeFèvre of Bayeux, France; Revd Chris Wingfield from Bossall. Email addresses now stand at 288 and (re-audited) membership at 358.
- Emails from (amongst others) Jim Olson, Joe Bain, Roger Howlett, Steve Williamson, Ann Pegg, Tony Wood, Arnaud LeFèvre, Patricia Croxton-Smith, Ray Theakston and ... a telephone conversation with Revd Chris Wingfield.

## Editorial

Many apologies for the lateness of this issue. Everything seemed to conspire against me in February.

Bossall has proved to be time-consuming - not least because (like many Botolph Churches) there is a lot more to it than initially met the eye. I thought that this issue was ready for publication yesterday but, as you will see, more and more links gradually came to light and I have had a most exciting day following them all up.

Although the above date says 1st March I will officially record here that the issue was not published until 8th March 2016.

## Church Feature

### **B**ossall, Yorks.

**Approach:** *From York, take the A64, turning right towards Stamford Bridge and Claxton. At the crossroads turn left along Kirk Balk Lane to Bossall and after a mile or so, as you round the bend, you will see the church on your right. There seems to be no car park but there again there is not much traffic..*



**Key:** *The church is open during daylight hours.*

**Vicar:** *Revd Chris Wingfield, The Vicarage, Sand Hutton, York YO41 1LB. Tel: 01904 468418 (Rector of the Harton Benefice of 10 churches).*

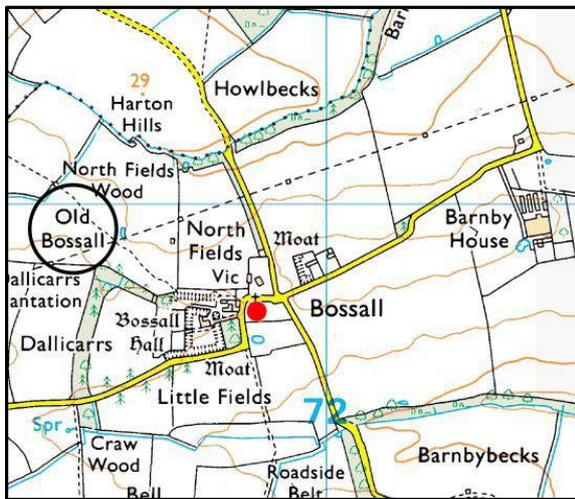
**Church services:** *On an ad hoc basis - normally once per month at 9 a.m. or 10.30 a.m. but check first on the Harton Benefice website at [www.sandhuttongroup.org.uk](http://www.sandhuttongroup.org.uk).*

**Location:** *Bossall, Buttercrambe, North Yorkshire YO60 7NT 54.0377, -0.9046 NGR: SE7183660747*

**Listed Grade: I**

I visited this church in July 2012 when I was not in the habit of taking as many photographs as I now do. My friend Ray Theakston lives just a few miles away and he kindly sent me some more pictures following his recent visit to the church. You will notice in the first picture (which I took) that the grass stands rather high. This is because in 1980 the churchyard was found to contain over 85 species of botanical interest so cutting now takes place only once every year - and then under supervision.

Many of the Botolph Churches that I feature in these columns, have their own notes and leaflets and these are of great help to me when I am compiling the church profiles. Saint Botolph's church Bossall has a particularly admirable booklet published by Teddy Denison in 2005.



In this he starts by telling us that *'any commentary of the church has to be set against the history of the village itself.'* He goes on to write that *'this is especially relevant because of the belief that prior to the present building there was an earlier church situated in the corner of 'Old Bossall Field' (ringed in the map above).* The Domesday Book records that in 1086 the village contained 6.7 households, 19 villagers, a church and a priest. Since the present church dates from 1180 this confirms that an earlier Saxon church must have existed.

The toponymy of the village's name is thought to be a contraction of 'Bosa's Hall' on the basis that Bosa, the third Archbishop of York, is reputed to have retired to Bossall in 686 (which, for the record, was 6 years after Botolph's death). The same map above shows Bossall Hall which is the third such structure to have existed on this site. The first was a moated Saxon Royal vill which was replaced by a Norman castle. This, in turn was replaced by the current hall in C18. The first Saxon church is thought to have been linked to the construction of the first hall.

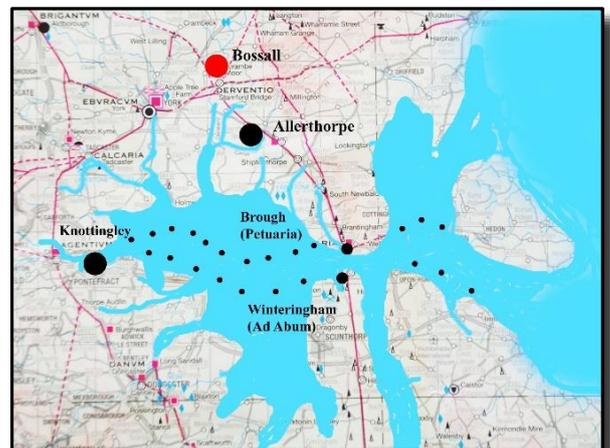
The vill was one of several occupied from 616 on a part-time basis by King Edwin (585-633) of Deira and Bernicia (see later map). He was eventually baptised a Christian in 627. Tradition has it that it was at Buttercrambe (2 miles south-east of Bossall) where he was crowned in 625.



In this map, the red lines are Roman roads and the blue dots represent likely Viking settlements. The blue stream is the River Derwent. This is not the same as the *Peak District's* River Derwent which runs through Matlock more than 50 miles to the southwest - this is the *Yorkshire* River Derwent which arises in the Cleveland Hills and today drains into the River Humber via the River Ouse.



As high up-river as Howsham, the river is still broad enough and deep enough to be used for transport (should that be required) and in C7 would, of course, have been even more so.



In C7 the Humber Estuary led into a wide shallow basin which was navigable right across to Knottingley in the west and close to Allerthorpe and Bossall in the north - all sites of Saint Botolph Churches.

Bossall follows the Botolph Church rules by being close to a Roman road and a water source.

### The Founder

Reverting to King Edwin - could it have been he who founded the first church? It seems not since, as legend tells us, he abandoned the vill in 626.

Was the founder ex-Archbishop Bosa himself or *was it founded during the intervening 60 years between Edwin's departure in 626 and Bosa's arrival in 686?*

One feels duty-bound to point out that these dates lie between the time of Botolph's landing in Britain in 647 (following his being 'professed' in France) and his death in 680? We will come back to this question later but since we are visiting the realms of speculation (and I say this with tongue in cheek) might we dare posit that if the origin of the village's name had been (like that suggested of Boston) not Bosa's but *Botolph's Hall* this would neatly explain not only the name of the village but also the likely identity of the church's founder and the choice of its dedication - but I guess that is too much to ask!

The Black Death of c.1349 had a catastrophic effect on the village's population with the result that today it consists of only a handful of dwellings and bears the record of being the smallest parish in the diocese of York.

In previous times however (as evidenced by the foundations of many buildings in 'Old Bossall Field') it was enormous. How are the mighty fallen? In this case however the village retains both its pride and its beauty and might even be said to benefit from the peacefulness provided by its reduced population.

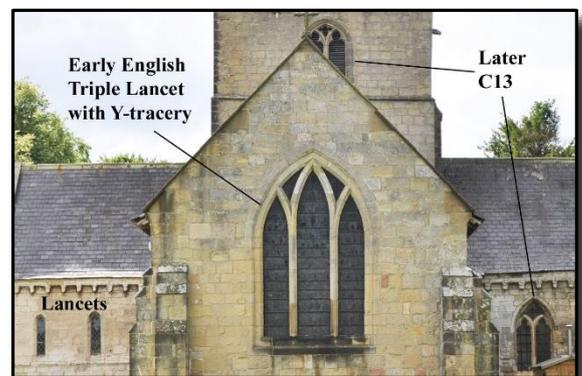
From the evidence offered by Bede later in this issue I wonder if some of the buildings in this field were part of a monastery attached to the church.

### The church

The fabric of the present cruciform building is dressed limestone and sandstone. It was founded by the lord of the manor Paulinus de Bossall. In 1312 the advowson passed to King Richard II and thence, in 1386, to the Prior and Convent at Durham.



It exemplifies an 'Early English' church style albeit with some restoration.



The basic structure dates from c.1180. The eastern windows are Lancet in style as seen in the pictures above. The name comes from their being shaped like the two-edged surgical knife formerly used to release blood.



I doubt that many of us are familiar with surgical lancets so I have included a picture. Note that this is *not* the same as a scalpel - which has only *one* cutting edge.



The western aspect reveals a variety of different window styles - the round-headed Norman style of the nave (not forgetting the round window in the west gable) and the flatter-headed, more Perpendicular style in the west wall of the south transept and south wall of the chancel.

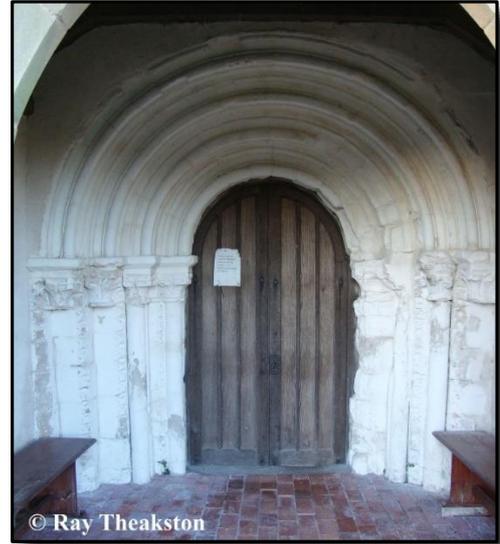
These mis-matches are explained by the fact that these parts of the church were extensively restored in 1859. There is also a C15 window in the north wall of the chancel.

The church consists of an aisleless nave, a chancel, and north and south transepts the former of which was blocked off in 1349 and not reopened until 1904. During this period the transept was used initially as a schoolhouse and **latterly as a barn**. The transept now houses the organ.



Teddy Denison tells us of an amusing incident relating to the transept in its 'barn days':

*"It is said that on one occasion when the famous Sydney Smith, Rector of Foston preached, he took his text from I Samuel XV: 'What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?'"*



The south porch is a later addition of C19 but the south doorway of the nave itself is Norman with four orders of shafts with dogtooth and stylised flowers.



The north doorway of the nave is similar but with only one order of shafts.



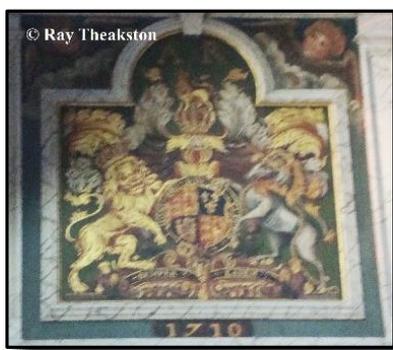
The picture above shows the nave looking west ...



... and this one illustrates the position of the C12 font.



Teddy Denison describes the font bowl as being 'transitional' (i.e. Romanesque merging with Gothic) on a later chevron column and base. The splendid carved wooden cover is C17.



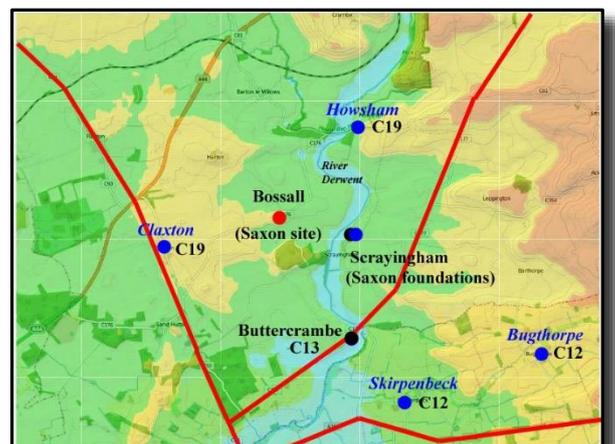
Near the font, on the north wall is a beautifully-painted Royal Coat of Arms dated 1710.



This view shows the opposite end of the church as we look down into the chancel with the central tower nearly above us and the south transept on our right. In C13 the tower started to collapse and, concomitant with the repair work, the chancel was extended by 14 feet and the nave shortened by a similar amount.



In the chancel we find an incomplete floor brass in memory of Robert Constable 1454. The church has four bells dated 1666, 1719, 1799 and 1833. There are stained glass windows by Kempe and Clayton and Bell.



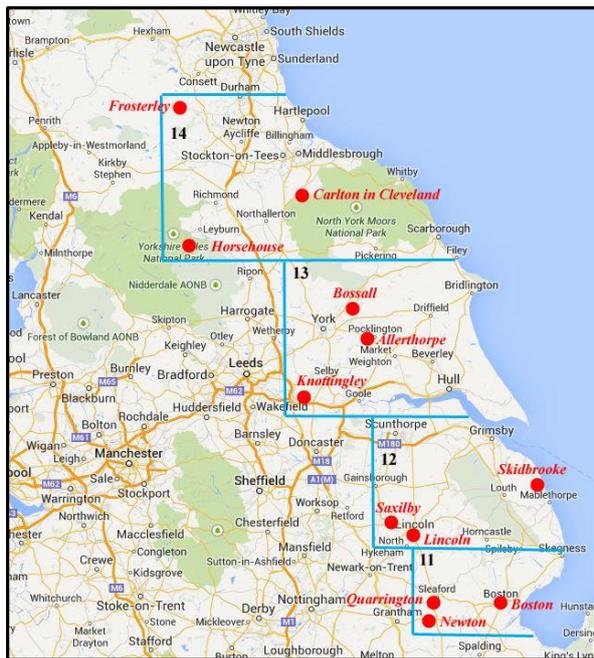
### The locality

This locality has more than its fair share of historical churches. In 2010, less than a mile away to the east-south-east and on the other side of the River Derwent in the village of Scrayingham, the church of St Peter and Paul, which until then was thought to date from C13, was serendipitously discovered to have a much earlier Saxon north wall.

At Buttercrambe there lies a Chapel of Ease dating back to c.1240. At both Skirpenbeck and Bugthorpe there is a church dating to C12.

It seems quite clear that, like the church at Scrayingham, the Bossall site comes from the Saxon era. The question is exactly *when*? The extra evidence of Archbishop Bosa retiring to the village strongly suggests that a Christian community and hence a church was present before 686.

The fact that this period (654-680) was a time when Botolph was most active in his missionary work, points to the likelihood of his having a hand in it.



If this surmise is true for Bossall, bearing in mind that it is the fourth most northerly church dedicated to our saint, then it gives some credence to the possibility that, in his lifetime, Botolph might indeed have travelled as far north as Frosterley in his attempts to spread Christianity. This lends strength to Carlton-in-Cleveland's claim that their church is also built on the site of a C7 predecessor visited by Saint Botolph.

Further research is needed - particularly regarding the dedications of these 'northern churches'. Has Saint Botolph been a continuous patron throughout the centuries or is there any record of changes? Who were the other Christian leaders active in the same area in C7? Was Botolph 'poaching' from them or was it so early in Britain's new Christian era (only 60 years after the arrival of Pope Gregory's mission in Kent) that no protocol had been established and any converts were fair gain?

### But there is more.

Saint Botolph's life is full of riddles and one of the four suggestions that exist for his provenance is that he was the son of Eugenius IV, king of Dál Riata (now loosely known as Argyllshire). Assuming this to be true, Botolph would have grown up in the company of the famous Oswald of Bernicia and Deira (see map below) who, it is said, fled to Dál Riata with his brothers and infant sister Aelle after his father, King Aethelfrith was killed.



Rather than the crown going to the 12-year-old Oswald, it was his Uncle Edwin who acceded. Realising that Edwin would regard them as a potential threat, the family fled to the north-west and were sheltered by King Eugenius.

Botolph was born four years or so later and was thirteen when the news arrived that King Edwin had been killed. The by now 29-year-old-Oswald and his 21-year-old-brother Oswiu immediately set out from the Dál Riata court to reclaim their kingdom. Botolph's father had died four years

previously and one of his elder brothers, Domnall Brecc, was now king. Oswald had a strong Christian faith which might have rubbed off onto Botolph. This, combined with the fact that the brothers would have felt a debt of gratitude for his father's protection, might have resulted in Botolph joining them for their triumphant return to Bernicia and Deira.

Domnall Brecc may have been pleased to see the back of his little brother and realised that while Botolph was with Oswald there would be a continuing bond between the two kingdoms. In 634 Oswald was crowned king of Bernicia and Deira.

Much of the story so far is of course speculative but it ties in with known facts and dates.

It seems that Botolph did not stay long in Oswald's court however because four years later we see him travelling to an Abbey near Paris to be professed first as a monk and then as a priest before returning to England in 647.

He returned, sadly, to find that Oswald had been killed by the notorious Penda of Mercia and Oswiu had been placed on the throne as a 'puppet king.'

The worm finally turned however, and much to general surprise, in 655 Oswiu killed Penda at the Battle of the River Winwaed. Bede tells us (in his Ch.24) that before the battle Oswiu

*'vowed that, if he were victorious, he would offer his daughter to God as a consecrated virgin and give twelve estates to build monasteries'.*

The 655 battle was just one year after Botolph had founded his Abbey of Icanho.

Is it not likely that, in the circumstances, the first person that Oswiu would turn to with regard to building the monasteries, would have been his now well-established friend Abbot Botolph? Might this explain the presence of the northern cluster of Botolph churches - so remote from Icanho?

By his defeat of Penda, Oswiu was able to unite Mercia, Bernicia and Deira and, for a year or so, bore the privilege of being recognised as the Bretwalda King of Britain. The triumph was not to last long as, after a short while, he was deposed by a Mercian revolt. He retreated northwards to Bernicia and Deira which by then were united as 'Northumbria' and ruled there until his death in 670.

### Classification of the Bossall site

I believe that Bossall is an important piece of the Botolph jigsaw and I would give it an 'A' classification.

In next month's issue we shall be looking at Allerthorpe, the *fifth* most northerly Saint Botolph's church. It will be interesting to see whether or not I can find any evidence here which strengthens the hypothesis of our saint's involvement in these regions.

### Thanks

I am most grateful to Ray Theakston and to Revd Chris Wingfield for their help with this church.

### Readers' letters and emails.

1. Following my notice that *The Botolphian* would be delayed this month, several members contacted me and (metaphorically) patted me on the head and urged me not to fret. Kind thoughts. Thank you.
2. Revd Jim Olson wrote from Chicago (sitting in his office looking out over a snowy Lake Michigan) saying that he too was somewhat delayed in his work but he always welcomes *The Botolphian* as a respite from some of his more unpleasant duties.
3. I have had a couple of emails from Joe Bain and Roger Howlett at the St Botolph Club Boston USA with a view to my going out there to speak to them in October 2017 and arrangements are in progress.
4. Steve Williamson wrote from Tottenhill expressing interest in the software I use for my contour maps and in my sources for Roman roads. He seemed pleased with the information I was able to give him.
5. Ann Pegg wrote from Barton Seagrave saying that, following the dismantling of their Victorian organ, inscriptions on previously hidden grave slabs have been revealed creating much interest.
6. Tony Wood is retiring as contact of the British Sundial Society but passed on the names of his two successors, Ian Buton and Lyn Stilgoe who will join us at the SOSB. Welcome to you both.
7. Dr Arnaud LeFèvre from Bayeux (Arnaud is the French Regional-Coordinator of 'The Viking Network' at [www.viking.no](http://www.viking.no)) replied to my earlier email and provided some useful comments about the Vikings in England and about the origins of Saint Ebroulf of Normandy.
8. Patricia Croxton-Smith gave me notice of a talk at Hadstock Essex by Dr Sam Newton on 19 May and the Hadstock Fete on 18 June. There is also a battle re-enactment by Regia Anglorum at nearby Assundun on the 3 days 9-11 September.

9. Ray Theakston of Haxby sent me the aforementioned photographs.

10. I had a pleasant conversation with Revd Chris Wingfield of St Botolph's Bossall. For some reason I had missed this church when the society started so he had never heard of us - but he has now and was reassuringly enthusiastic. Welcome Chris.

### 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

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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 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.