

The Botolphian

Newsletter of The Society of Saint Botolph
www.botolph.info

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

1400th Anniversary year (circa) of the birth of
St Botolph

Born
c. 620



Died
680

Patron saint of Wayfarers, Sailors and Farmers.

Highlights this month

- **Church of Hardham, West Sussex.**
- It gives me great pleasure to the following new members: Revd Kathryn Evans - the new curate at Church with Chapel Brampton and Father Peter Mallinson at St Botolph's Hardham.
- Correspondence from Marion Peel, Michael Knights and Revd William Howard.

Editorial

Yes indeed! This year it is Saint Botolph's birthday and (as the modern expression goes) a BIG one!

Sadly when you are a C7 Anglo-Saxon, it seems that nobody remembers the actual date of your birth although (particularly if you are a saint) the date of your *death* will be 'faithfully recorded.'

We can never hope to calculate the *exact* date of St Botolph's birthday but the year 620 is generally

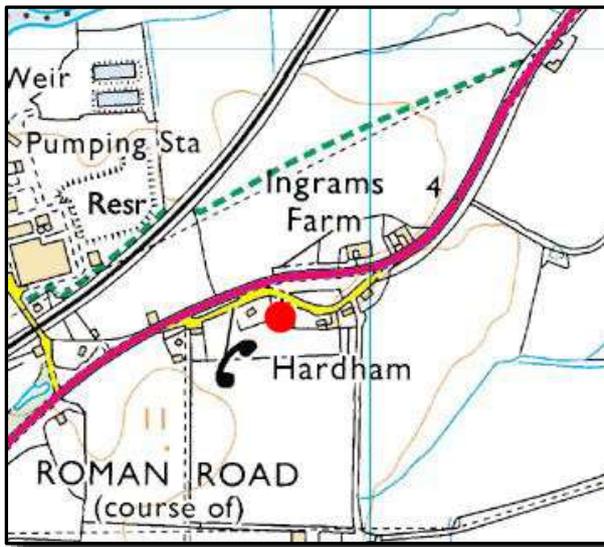
found to be acceptable and this gives us just cause for celebration.

Church Feature

Hardham, West Sussex.



Approach: If you are on the A29, travelling towards Pulborough, the main road by-passes a lane which leads to the church and if you miss the first right hand turning you can take the second one just a few yards further on and approach from the other direction.



Key: The church is usually open.

Rector: Father Peter Mallinson, The Arun Churches' Vicarage, Church Lane, Bury, RH20 1PB. Tel: 01798 839-057.

peter6hq@btinternet.com

Location: 50.9485, -0.5228, RH20 1LB

Church Website <https://www.arunchurches.com>

Listed Grade: Grade I.



We approach this pretty little church from the north and find, just outside the gate, a cast blue sign telling us:

Hardham Church was probably built c.1050 and has one of the finest series of wall paintings in the county, painted in the 1100s. It is one of a group of six churches including West Chiltington where the surviving paintings can be compared with contemporary illustrated manuscripts. A single

group of painters may have been responsible for these wall paintings.

Re-used Roman bricks and tiles in the walls of the church, remind us that Hardham is close to the line of Stane Street, the Roman road. Several Roman sites have been found in the vicinity, notably a military staging post, bath houses and villa. From this site anyone in power could control the tidal waters of both the river Arun and the River Rother.

Domesday

Domesday gives the village's name as *Herisdeham* which the church guide tells us means 'home of a woman named 'Heregyth.' The guide goes on to say that the village 'emerged from obscurity when it was chosen by the Romans as the site of a road-station, the first on Stane Street from Regnum to Londinium . . . (the station was established within 10 years of the (Roman) conquest and it probably remained in occupation for about 100 years.'

In 1066 the Lord of the Manor was one by the name of Godwin - but not *Earl* Godwin father of King Harold despite the fact that the Earl is thought to have grown up in Sussex and certainly owned many manors near to Hardham.

After the conquest the tenant-in-chief of the land was Earl Roger of Shrewsbury and the manor was owned by Ivo of Grandmesnil and Robert son of Theobald. The population was small - just 15 households - and all would have been expected to attend this little church.



One of the first things that I noted was that, although the church seems stable enough, the surrounding ground is remarkably soft and irregular and somewhat reminiscent to me of the swell to be found in the English Channel when a storm is brewing in the Western Approaches.



It really is most peculiar and made me wonder if over the years a million moles had been redesigning the landscape or if the church had been built in the middle of a group of Neolithic burial barrows. It would not surprise me to find that the latter were the case.



Signs of the swell persist as we round the southwestern corner and find a blocked up southern doorway . . .



. . . with an interesting composite lintel which would have been even more interesting if it had had carvings on it.



The stone of which it and the rest of the church is made however is of an extremely hard and rough texture which would not lend itself easily to the chisels of a sculptor. This picture, taken of the eastern edge of the doorway while I was searching for the existence of a Mass Dial, shows that the weathered stone is 'exactly the worst sort of stone against which to graze one's skin.' I wonder what stones lurk behind the limewash and why they were painted. Was it to make them kinder to the eye or kinder to the flesh of any unfortunate who might graze his skin against them?



A broad picture of the church's southern aspect shows it comfortably riding the green waves and reveals a strange little high window in the centre of the nave . . .



. . . with nothing particularly strange about its structure.



. . . and another window - too wide to have been original - placed at the eastern end of the nave.



Soon after the junction of the nave to the chancel we find this (thankfully-preserved) Hagioscope opening - alternatively known as a 'Squint.' This was only discovered in 1900.



Like many others, I have been vacillating in my opinions about the purpose of these Hagioscopes. Much of the confusion, I feel, has been caused by the name itself: *Hagio* (Greek for 'holy') and *scope* - similarly from a Greek root but with obscure meanings. We customarily think of it as being the suffix in *telescope* and *microscope* and therefore regard it as being associated with vision but the Greek word is ambiguous in this respect and can just as easily mean 'target' or 'purpose.'

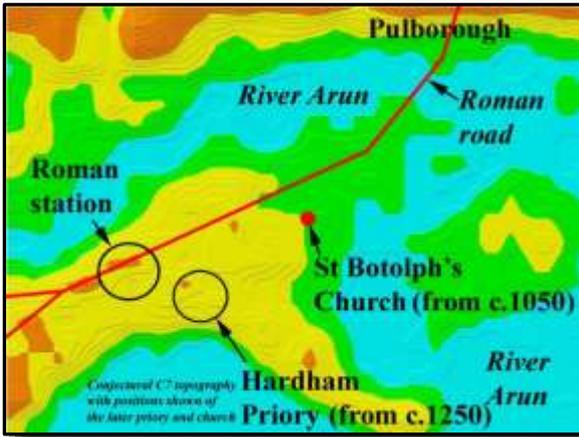
The word 'Hagioscope' was coined in early C19 to apply to a C14 structure of unknown purpose. The features seem to have been superseded a short while later by Lowside Windows.

It has been suggested that both were involved with 'the unclean' receiving communion without entering the church but this has now been discounted.

It is fairly certain however that both have something to do with alerting those outside the church (on festive occasions when the overflow congregation were in the churchyard) to the fact that the communion host has been elevated - the climax of the Christian ritual when communicants were bound by law to cross themselves. At this time the sacring bell would be 'tinkled' at the altar.

The question is: was the purpose of the hagioscope to allow the outside observer to *see* the host's elevation . . . or to *hear* the sacring bell? A 45 degree squint like this one at Hardham (when not blocked on the inside) might allow the observer to do both. Lowside windows, on the other hand, give a 90 degree view into the church through thick walls and this has generated some confusion as a view of the high altar is often not possible. With the window open the outside observer, although unable to *see* the elevation of the host would however still be able to *hear* the bell and I suspect he would then, using his own bell, ring that with his left hand whilst crossing himself with his right.

The church guide suggests an alternative purpose for the 'squint' and tells us that it is presumed that it '*locates the site of an anchorite's cell, one certain occupant of which was Prior Richard in 1285 A.D.*' The same guide tells us that "*Botolph and his brother were sent to a monastery in Bosham.*" This is not the first time that I have heard rumour of a connection between St Botolph and nearby Bosham and it would not surprise me to find some truth in it . . . although I have yet to see any supporting evidence.



Shown above is the conjectural topography of the area in C7 and marked upon it are the locations of the later C11 church and the C13 priory (where Prior Richard was based). As the River Arun runs to the west it becomes the River Rother. Returning to the church: next to the squint opening is a 2-light Victorian window in C14 Decorated Gothic style.



On the southeast corner of the chancel . . .



I am never sure whether to be pleased that the craftsmen have made little attempt at hiding the fact that such windows are a modern replacement or to bemoan the fact that their construction seems so flat and unexciting compared to examples made by their C14 predecessors.



. . . a couple of Roman tiles have been left exposed by the Hardham lime-washers.



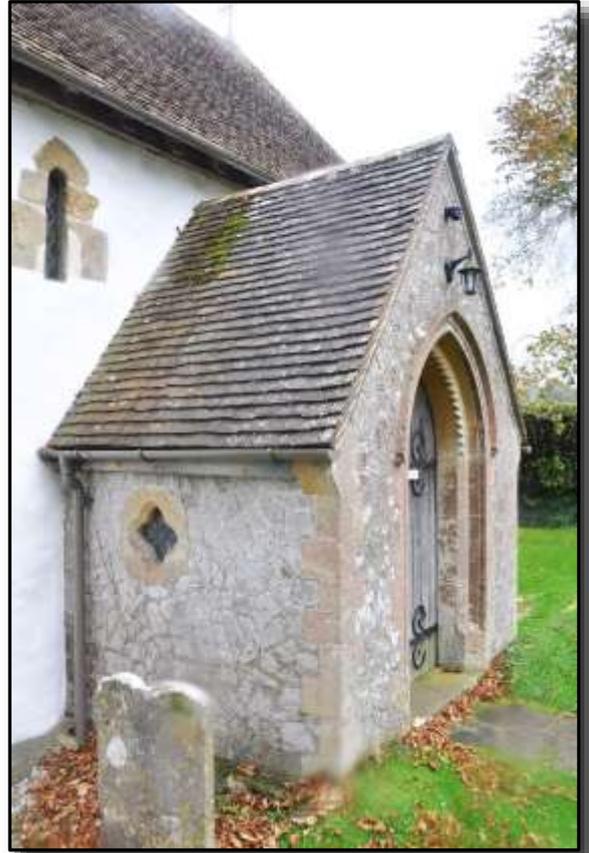
The restored east window is in some ways nicely in keeping but in other ways a disappointment.



Once again there is a Roman tile at head height on the chancel wall. This and its partner are so strategically placed that one might be forgiven for thinking that they might have been so positioned for effect rather than by chance. Should the limewash one day be removed however I have little doubt that other similar examples will be found in the walls. A single lancet window sits high up on the north chancel wall.



The north side of the nave has a similar lancet but with another too-large-to-be-original one further east.



The masonry of the later (C19) north porch is by contrast comfortably smooth.



The dogtooth moulding on the arch of the doorway gives a pleasing hint of the past . . . and the sign on the door says 'OPEN.'



Above us sits the C19 wooden belfry with its weathervane.



The plain octagonal font dates from C15.



As we enter the church and close the unremarkable north door behind us we are overwhelmed by the fact that there is so much to see and yet so little to see. So little because there is no piscina, no sedilia, no aumbry, no frills around the chancel arch . . . and yet so much because we are surrounded by pictures. Let us first soak in the ambience while looking at something with which we are familiar.



We can see that although it has been dressed more sympathetically than the quoins on the outer angles of the church walls, the font bowl is made from the same stone.



As we turn from the font and look east we are greeted by the magnificent sight of walls covered by paintings. They are now of course pale shadows of their former selves which would have been in vibrant colours. We are bound to ask if, had the colours survived they would have been overpowering to our C21 eyes but this same phenomenon is quite bearable today in Mediterranean churches so it would seem likely that if we had been around in C14 we would have been as awestruck by the inside of this church as our predecessors must have been. And despite their paleness we are awestruck today.

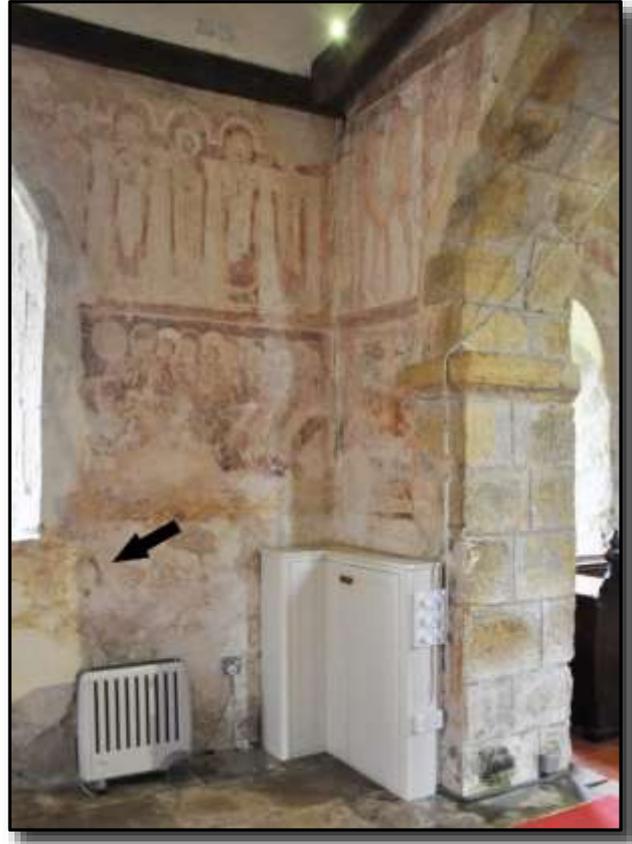
Let us for the moment tear our eyes away from these masterpieces and concentrate on the other internal features. The chancel arch is rounded in Norman style rather than being pointedly Gothic.



To the left of the arch stands the C18 pulpit, the lectern receiving light from that extra window we mentioned when viewing the exterior.



To the right the uncompromising massive blocks of stone lend the arch their support. Being built so 'chunkily' it is perhaps not surprising that the church survives despite the uncertainty of the wavy ground beneath.



If we look back to where the chancel wall meets that of the nave we can see a small circle (arrowed) where the squint opened from the outside. I rather wish that I had measured its height from the floor but the distance looks to be only about 3 ft. so the observer outside would certainly have to crouch in order to be able to hear or see activities within.



The sanctuary is simple, unencumbered by the paraphernalia of aumbry, piscina or sedilia. The east window together with the window in the south wall do not give a lot of light - but sufficient. The shape of the arch at the top of the window opening suggests a Tudor provenance. On the left, where the vase of plants now conveniently rests there is a corbel. I guess that in the past it must have supported a statue.



A reminder of the outside picture shows us that 45 degrees was a little optimistic. Compared to the cill of the window the eastern part of the hole goes almost straight through - it is just the western part that has been carved away - perhaps so that it is large enough to get a head (or at least an ear) inside the cavity.



An interesting feature inside the east window is this stone block and at first I could not fathom out why it should be there. Subsequently I realised that it was probably to support an image or a cross.



There is a blemish on the wall near the chancel's NE corner. Was there perhaps once an aumbry here?



The roof beams of the chancel are unusual too. I cannot recall seeing such conveniently angled grown timbers applied in this way.



Looking west back into the nave, the roof beams that support the crown posts are straight - but they of course have a wider span to cover.



The pews are of the box type - without any fancy poppy ends - and they once, no doubt, would have had doors. The doors are now missing but a great benefit has been added: you will see that under each pew is a radiator.

The Wall Paintings

It has to be said that this is a *very special* church - for at least two reasons. Firstly because it has changed very little since it was built in C11 and secondly because it has the **best set of wall paintings in the United Kingdom**.

They constitute a complete set - which is unusual in itself - the only pieces missing being where extra windows have been punched through the walls and where some plaster was removed from the chancel arch. Thus when you visit, you have

the joy of walking into an almost untouched art gallery dating from 50 years after the Norman Conquest. Altogether there are some forty themes.

For these paintings we can thank the St Pancras' Priory at Lewes - one of the richest English monasteries in England of its time - for it was this priory which sponsored and oversaw the work of which other similar examples are to be found at Coombes (just a stone's throw away from St Botolph's Church in the village of Botolphs) and at Clayton, Plumpton and Westmeston.

The Lewes Group were a collection of peripatetic lay artists who travelled from church to church. Their technique was to first apply a thick layer of plaster to the walls and then add thinner layers in patches where the scenes and borders were depicted. Each patch was then painted whilst the plaster was still wet - this is the **classical fresco technique** which distinguishes the artwork and lifts it well above the realms of just being a boring old wall painting!

Although the work was done nearly 900 years ago it has only been exposed to public gaze for about 250 since for some reason it was plastered over in C13 and did not see the light of day again until the paintings were re-discovered in 1866. They have been subjected to several bouts of restoration over the years the last being by the Canterbury Cathedral Wall Paintings Workshop in 1986.

Nicolaus Pevsner suggested that that the pictures' designs might have been taken from such manuscripts as the Caedmon of AD1000. In 1965 Pevsner wrote that "so much has faded at Hardham that . . . there is not much more left than a confused blur of red and yellow ochre." Once the Canterbury experts got to work I am sure that things became a lot better although I suspect that the time is coming when they might need to return since there are now areas where some of the pictures are difficult to interpret.

The church guide writes: *The distinctive 'bacon and egg' palette of the paintings results from the use of a very limited range of cheap, locally available pigments - red and yellow ochre, lime white, and carbon black.*

St George

In the nave the paintings in this C12 art gallery are 'hung' in two tiers. Remembering that the altar is in the east, reorientate yourself so that we start by looking at the lower tier of pictures at the western end of the north wall.



Here we see St George on his trusty white steed - his lance piercing the body of an infidel. At the top right one can just make out a kite-shaped shield with a round boss - this is being held by another infidel. Lying naked beneath the horse (very difficult to see) is another injured alien. This celebrates St George at the Battle of Antioch during the First Crusade when he and two other saints on white horses are said to have come to the relief of the crusaders.



St George, perfectly decent although wearing nothing but his halo, is held by two torturers.



Here St George, tied to a wooden frame, waits the horrors of a hunch-backed torturer (on the lower right).



Difficult to interpret, this picture shows a figure leaning over a tomb and is thought to represent the death of St George. Note the sympathetic 'hollow' hymn board.



I have found from previous experience - notably when photographing the wall paintings at North Cove in Suffolk - that the detail often seemed to look better in monochrome. This time I found that, like with this picture, that many facsimiles looked better in colour so henceforth I have now adopted the habit of using whichever turns out best. Above we have a half-naked St George strapped to a wheel. To the right of the picture there is some damage where a new window has been inserted and this has resulted in the complete loss of one scene.

There are so many pictures concerned with St George that one might begin to think that the church should have been dedicated to *him* rather than to St Botolph . . . and that indeed was the case - and a C12 charter tells us so!

Why then do we have the honour of this wonderful church being dedicated to our saint today? As we know ancient St Botolph churches have frequently been found to have had even more ancient predecessors. Could there have been an earlier church here - either from C7 or from C10 - which originally bore St Botolph's name?

Was today's 'c.1050' church actually a *re-build* which was completed just *after*, rather than just before, the Norman Conquest? If so it would be unsurprising if it were dedicated to St George in order to appease the Normans who are known to have been reluctant to acknowledge British saints.

When then did it revert to St Botolph? This might have occurred in C14 when French demands had become less stringent - or maybe it continued as St George's until after the Reformation (during which time the use of all saints' names was suppressed) and reverted to St Botolph in C18 when, as Professor Nicholas Orme tells us, there were frequent rededications "*as the antiquaries produced new conjectures.*"

My impression is that churches were only dedicated to St Botolph when there was a definitive reason rather than merely 'on a whim.' The reasons might be:

1. That an early foundation on the site had had a close link with St Botolph himself.
2. Promotion of the church by Bishop Aethelwold of Winchester and/or others who favoured St Botolph during the monastic revival of mid C10.
3. A church that was built with a view to catering particularly for travellers . . . thus dedicated in the hope that custom would be encouraged by the spiritual presence of the Patron Saint of Wayfarers.
4. A choice based on a superstition that the introduction of a St Botolph's church into the manor would promote good harvests and/or successful sheep rearing.

I have found no evidence for there being an earlier church on this site and so I am bound to say that it looks as if it was a new site in C11 and that the church was not completed until after the Norman Conquest. Unless it had been dedicated to St Botolph previously I can see no logic in it being thus re-dedicated in C18 so this would suggest a C13 (or perhaps C14) rededication on the basis of number 3 above.

I suspect that in C13 or thereabouts there might have been a money-making venture to put Hardham church on the map as a venue for pilgrims passing there whilst on their way to Canterbury or London. As shown on the map below Hardham was in exactly the right position from the point of view of intersecting roads.

By C13 it might have become clear that St George's usefulness had come to an end and that St Botolph was the saint of the moment. By this time London already had a St Botolph church at each of its four main gates. A traveller from the north might enter the city through Billingsgate, Aldersgate or Aldgate (it would have mattered not which for they all had their St Botolph churches) and then leave the city via Billingsgate. If Hardham's church became rededicated it would only be another 42 miles before the traveller would pass another St Botolph church where he might like to leave a votive offering and light a candle in the hope that our saint would continue to protect him on the last part of his journey.

Once the decision had been made to switch to St Botolph, the act of plastering over Hardham's St George frescoes would have reinforced the change in the minds of the locals. Perhaps whoever was in charge thought that this brightened the interior of the church so much that they decided to 'go the whole hog' and cover them all. It was perhaps a

case of "out with the old St George and in with the new St Botolph."

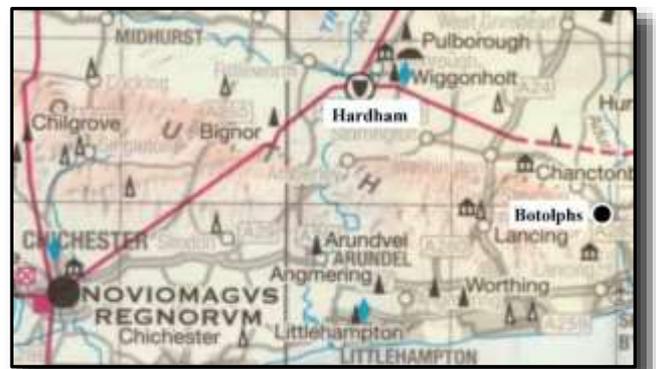
But who was in charge? Roger of Shrewsbury who was tenant-in-chief in 1086 was also the first Earl of Arundel (see map below). His successor from 1224 to 1243 was Hugh d'Aubigny 5th Earl of Arundel who was married to the religious patron and cousin of Henry III Isabel de Warenne who had strong connections to Norfolk. Isabel survived her husband for 39 years during which she proved to be a redoubtable countess and might have brought her influence to bear on Hardham church.

My suggested dates would therefore be:

- c.1064 Church building starts
- c.1068 Church building completed
- c.1110 Frescoes painted
- c.1240 Frescoes plastered over and church re-dedicated to St Botolph.

This mid C13 date, as evinced by the experts' estimate of the length of time for which the paintings were first exposed might be important in the annals of St Botolph because this movement towards a rededication in his favour might well have become fashionable during that period and have been repeated in many other churches.

I would then hazard a guess that Hardham church might aptly be classified as B(iii) - a Travellers' Church founded after the Norman Conquest.

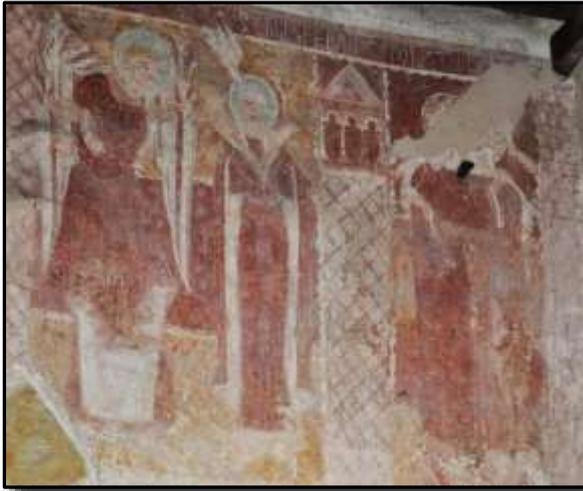


On that basis, by looking at the Roman roads (above), it is clear that Hardham is at the intersection of many major routes, with the next St Botolph's church being only 11 miles to the east at the village of Botolphs.

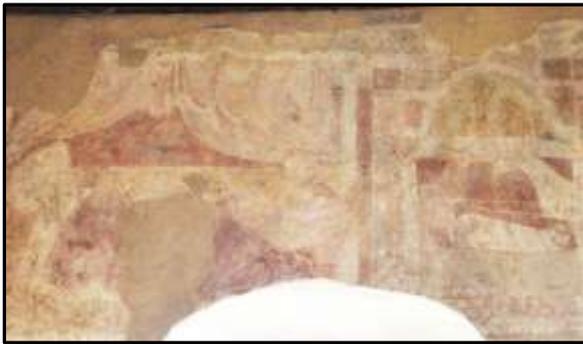
The Infancy of Christ series of pictures

The first picture in this long series starts on the south side of the Chancel arch and then progresses as an upper tier along the south nave wall until it reaches the west wall where it jumps to the north and continues to finish on the north side of the Chancel arch where, so to speak, the tail of the progression meets the head.

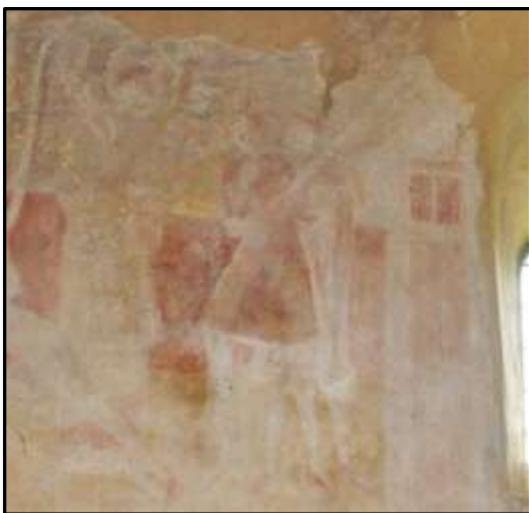
As you work your way around the church looking at these pictures then you are constantly moving from left to right.



Chancel arch south. *The Annunciation*: Gabriel stands on the left while the dove descends towards the Virgin Mary (standing with hands raised). On the right side of this same picture: *The Visitation*: Mary and Elizabeth embrace.



South wall. *The Nativity*: To the left the Virgin Mary lies in bed. Above are wildly blowing curtains. To the right Joseph is seated at Mary's feet. (Personally I have difficulty with this one). Further right the swaddled Christ child can be seen with the ox and the ass.



Annunciation to the Shepherds: On the left the angel faces shepherds two of whom are standing

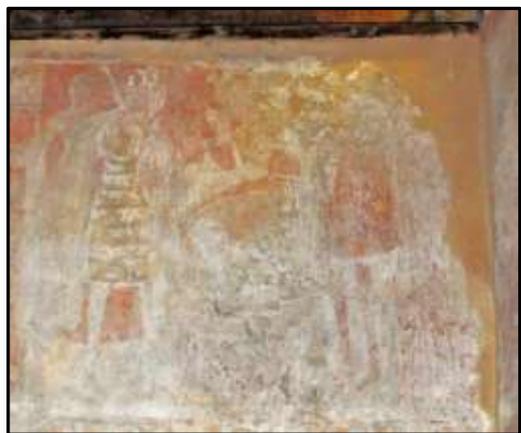
while a third (below) is kneeling. (I cannot see the kneeling shepherd).



Unidentified group: Here there are two groups of opposing figures (their shoes are readily identifiable). The group on the right are wearing horned headdresses.



The Magi: The kings are walking rather than riding and wearing hats rather than crowns.



Herod orders the Massacre of the Children: Herod, enthroned, sits at the centre with his hand raised instructing the soldiers. At this point we

have reached the west wall which depicts scenes of Hell.



Now at the west end of the north wall but still following the upper tier. *The Adoration of the Magi*: The three kings, now crowned face the Virgin and Christ Child on the right. One king is kneeling.



Dreams of Joseph and the Magi: The upper section shows Joseph lying in bed and a warning angel flying down from a cloud above. Below, the Magi are also abed and similarly dreaming.



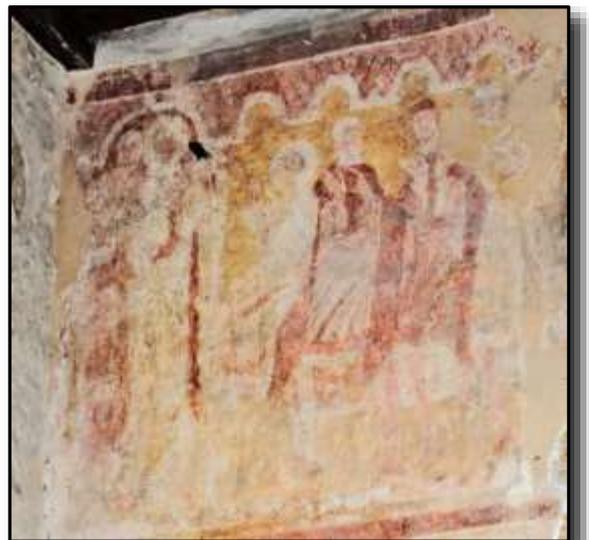
Flight into Egypt: Joseph leads the Virgin and Child to Egypt.



Falling idols: The miracle of the idols falling from their niches when the Holy Family reaches the Egyptian town of Sotina.



Massacre of the Innocents: A mother pleads for mercy as two soldiers butcher her children.



And now on the north side of the east nave wall. *Christ amongst the Doctors*: Three doctors on the right; the Christ Child in the centre turns to greet

Mary and Joseph (on the left) as they enter the temple.

This completes the 14 scenarios showing the infancy of Christ. Powerful stuff 800 years ago (or even yesterday) if you are a teenager who cannot read and a village elder is taking you round the church, showing you the pictures and explaining the story to you.

There are 20 more pictures to see but I think that those I have described are quite enough for one issue. Keep these and Hardham church in mind though because I will cover the remaining pictures next month.

Hardham is certainly a church to be visited - even if it means making a bit of a journey. Do, however, remember to take both this and next month's *Botolphian* with you in order to help you to interpret what you are seeing.

Footnote

Having just spoken to Father Peter at Hardham he tells me that today (1st January 2020) marks the end of the Arun Benefice to which St Botolph's belonged and the inception of a new *single parish* covering Bury, Coldwaltham, Hardham and Houghton. This means, amongst many other benefits, just *one* PCC instead of four and promises to make administration much easier. Getting to this point has taken a great deal of hard work for everyone concerned so our congratulations to Father Peter and his team and best wishes to the new parish.

Thanks

Many thanks to the anonymous authors of the two very helpful church guides - one guide to the church itself and the other to the wall paintings.

Correspondence

- 1. Marion Peel** from St Botolph's at Church with Chapel Brampton wrote to say that they have a new curate Revd Kathryn Evans and that she would like to join the society. Welcome Kathryn.
- 2. Michael Knights** wrote from St Botolph's (ruins) at Shotesham telling me that he had visited a church at North Crawley in Bucks. The church had a fine rood screen and a lovely roof with angel corbels and it was dedicated to . . . St Firmin. I was interested to note that this saint was, like (part of) St Botolph, buried at Thorney and that the church dated to 925. I cannot for the moment see where it is but there might be some contact with St Botolph so for the moment I will, as they say at this festive season, keep St Firmin on ice. Thank you Michael.
- 3. Revd William Howard** - ex rector of St Botolph's at Grimston in Norfolk and an old

friend of the society wrote gently teasing me about last month's issue and noted that I was scraping the bottom of the barrel a bit but did eventually come up with something worth finding out about 'that church that wasn't there.' He also mentioned that he was Rector of St Botolph's Grimston for 30 years and wondered if anybody could beat that record?

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Best wishes to all our readers for a Very Happy New Year.

REGULAR END-NOTES

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 Church sites:-

- A: **C7 church sites** relevant to Botolph's life.
(i) Founded by radiation from Botolph centres.
(ii) Founded along the course of Botolph's journeys.
- B: **Travellers' churches.**
(i) Founded before AD 800
(ii) Founded between 800 and 1066
(iii) Founded after the Norman Conquest.
- C: **Hanseatic churches** founded as a result of commercial enterprise.
- D: None of the above.

Typical Characteristics of Early St Botolph Churches.

1. Nearly all are in the eastern half of England
2. Most have Saxon foundations.
3. Many lie within 3 miles of a Roman road or well-used waterway.
4. Most are situated close to the bottom of an escarpment but well clear of water levels.
5. Many are strategically placed in areas which represent the beginnings, middles and ends of long journeys.

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