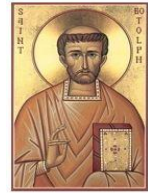




The Botolphian

Newsletter of
The Society of Saint Botolph

www.botolph.info



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Issue Number: 108

Now published every other month

1st December 2023

Highlights this month

- **Whitekirk** in East Lothian – a ‘must visit’ for Medieval pilgrims.
- **Herdmanston Chapel** – potentially another dedication to Saint Botolph.

Editorial



SOSB Luncheon, Cambridge 18 Oct 2023

I am pleased to be able to report that despite reduced numbers I counted this year’s luncheon a great success – and I believe the feeling was unanimous. We were well looked after by the hotel, and the food, company and general ambiance were excellent. Many thanks to all who supported the event.

We hope for better numbers next year – but whatever happens it seems that it is fairly well assured that we will have a good time because it is the *people* who make the event a success and we seem to be blessed with really nice people so thank you again.

Regarding next year’s luncheon, there was some discussion about holding it a little later (so that it does not clash with the half-term holiday) and perhaps choosing a different day – maybe a Tuesday – in the hope that we might attract greater numbers. Some thoughts were expressed that if we make the date later the nights will be drawing in and be hazardous for those who have

a long journey home and we must indeed consider that.

The suggested date at the moment is Guy Fawkes’ Night! Tuesday 5th November 2024 at 1230 for 1 p.m. – and we rather favour trying to hold the luncheon in one of the colleges – *and* we are looking for a good speaker.

Please let me know your views on the date – and perhaps, if you have any influence in that direction, help us to find a suitable college venue – and a good speaker.

Feature

The Cult of Saint Botolph in Eastern Scotland

In the last issue we looked at the connections between Saint Botolph and Lindisfarne. This month we are following the trail of northward - travelling pilgrims as they leave Lindisfarne in C15 on their way to the shrine of St Andrew. The underlying purpose of this study is to search for evidence that pilgrims themselves were in part responsible for the spread of St Botolph’s cult to the north. By the time they reached Lindisfarne many of them would already have visited Botolphian shrines at the abbeys of Westminster, Thorney and Bury St Edmunds, as well as receiving hospitality at many Saint Botolph’s churches *en route* if they travelled overland.

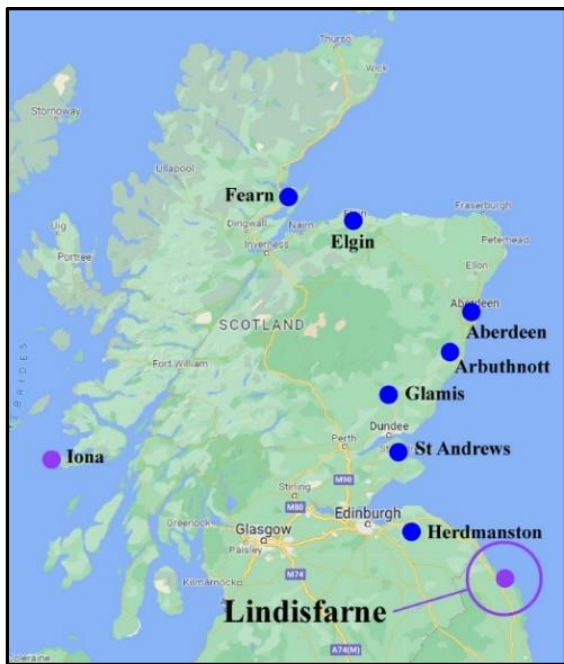
Approaching the subject from another aspect I had earlier hoped that I would be able to confirm the extent of Saint Botolph’s cult in Scotland simply by examining a plethora of northern Kalendars, Breviaries and Missals, and listing those in which his Saints Day was celebrated. Sadly, the anticipated ‘plethora’ turned out to be a ‘dearth’.

I had guessed that, in Scotland, I might find perhaps **50** abbeys, cathedrals and other holy places where masses were regularly celebrated and that each of these would bear fruit for me when I studied their missals.

In fact, when I looked it up the true number was actually *higher* than this. Between C11 and C15 there were **135** such foundations. Many of these however perished at the time of the Reformation and their books and records perished with them with the result that without being able to study their kalendars we cannot tell whether they celebrated Saint Botolph on 17th June or not.

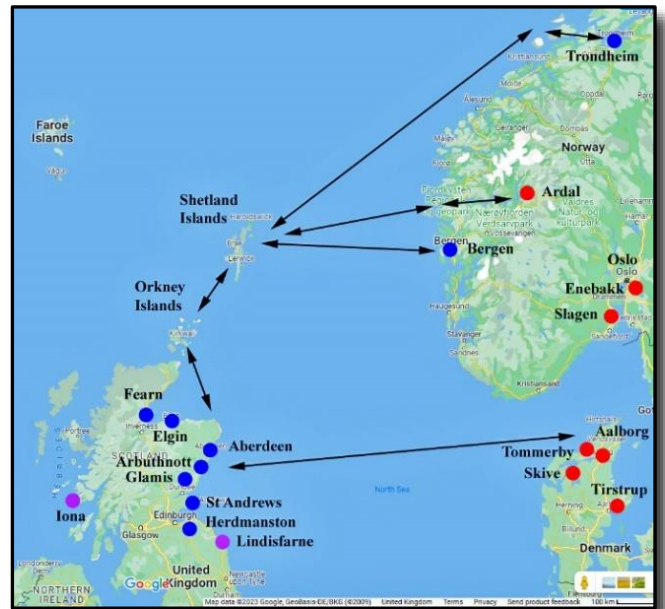
The handful where books and records *have* survived have already been identified by earlier researchers, but I could hardly believe there were so few. I felt like Oliver Twist asking for more. “Is that really *all*?”

The institutions previously thus identified are at the abbeys of Nova Farina (just outside Fearn), Elgin, Aberdeen, Arbuthnott, Glamis, and Herdmanston.



One might have thought that six locations, adequately spaced out and all showing support for Saint Botolph’s name, would have been quite sufficient to leave no doubt that his cult existed far up into the north of the eastern side of Scotland, but I was hoping for signs of greater density.

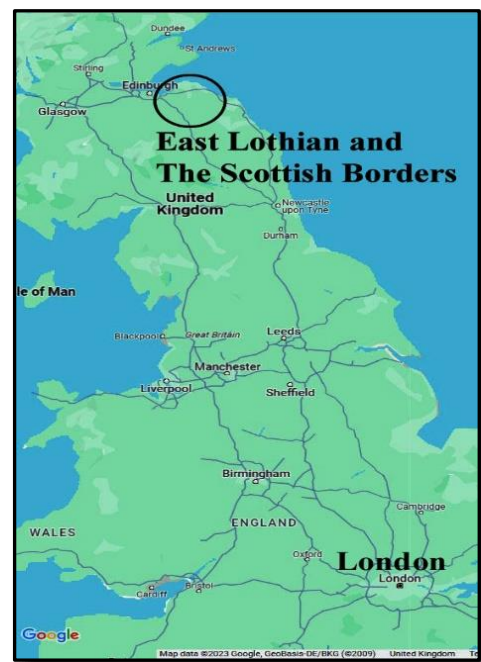
Apart from the spread of his name by pilgrims, a second source of the spread must be put down to Botolph’s association with seaborne trade and transport, and it is clear from the map below that eastern Scotland is ideally placed from that point of view.



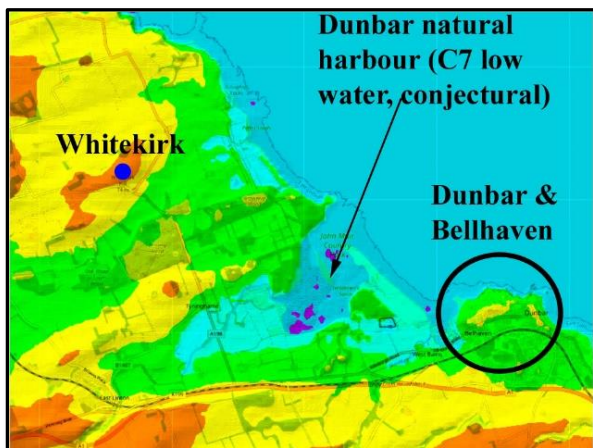
The red dots shown in Scandinavia are sites of churches dedicated to Saint Botolph (known there as *St Bodel*), and the blue dots of Trondheim and Bergen indicate that the people of these two cities were also associated with his cult. Thus those pilgrims who chose to travel by sea rather than on foot, would also meet our saint’s name when the ‘going got tough’ and they found the crew of their vessel praying through Saint Botolph for safe deliverance.

Whitekirk

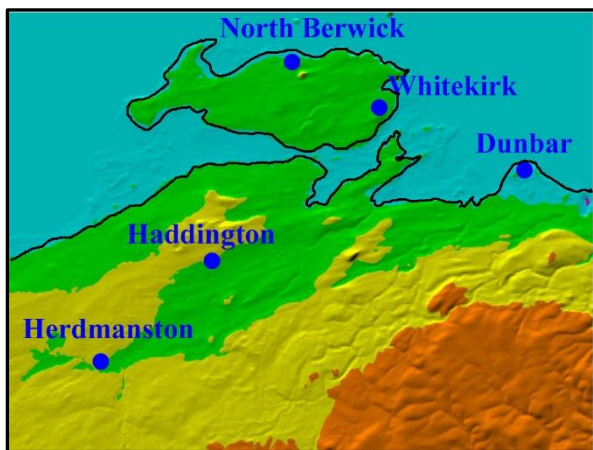
The name of this small village has cropped up several times during my research; it is hailed as an integral part of the northern pilgrimage route, and we find it in East Lothian.



In the December 2020 issue,¹ we mentioned the story of Aeneas Piccolomini, the papal legate (he later became Pope Pius II) who in 1435 was sailing for St Andrews when his ship became in danger of foundering in a storm, but was saved when the ship's master was able to find refuge in Dunbar. We are told that, as a display of gratitude for his salvation, Piccolomini walked barefoot through the frozen countryside to the nearest shrine of Our Lady which proved to be at *Whitekirk*.



The story is written as if the proximity of St Mary's shrine at Whitekirk was simply fortuitous. It is more likely however that Piccolomini's 1435 visit to 'The White Kirk' was already listed on his itinerary as, by that time, this little church had been a major pilgrimage attraction for many decades.



The above is a conjectural view of the area's earlier topography (as it was perhaps eight centuries earlier in C7) before the waterways gradually silted up until they formed the cohesive landmass we see today. Such a coastline would favour the easy landing and subsequent relaunching of the flat-bottomed boats of yesteryear.

¹ December 2020: No.91: St Andrews and Scotland in general.



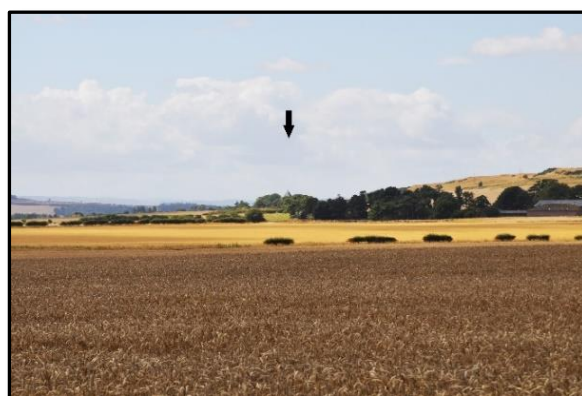
Although this issue's project is to find more out about pilgrims visiting the humble but significant church at Whitekirk, the one place which shows more definite evidence of St Botolph's cult is at Herdmanston (also in East Lothian) and this will comprise the second half of this month's feature. Other places where there might also be some evidence of Botolphian veneration are at Melrose and Kelso. We will be looking at those in a later issue.

The White Kirk

Today the church sits at a road junction close to the top of a mild rise with no sign of crowds flocking to it.



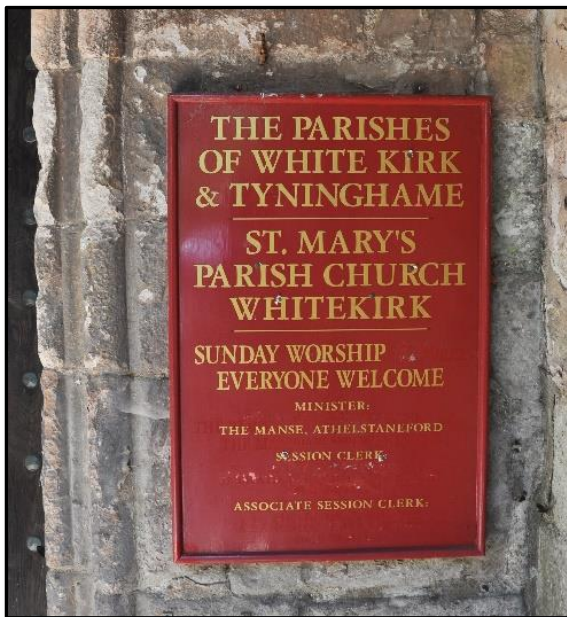
A pretty church further enhanced by the use of lovely pink Scottish sandstone as its building material. The cruciform church we see today dates from C15 but was rebuilt in C20.



Looking across the fertile fields towards the church with St Andrews way into the distance, one can just see 'The White Kirk's' spire (arrowed) poking its top over the trees.



A notice inside the south porch is our first indication of the church's dedication which proves to be that of Saint Mary the Virgin. A try of the inner door tells us that the church is at present closed to visitors. If I had done my homework I would already have known this; I was actually two years too late - the last service here was held on 5th September 2021.



The noticeboard still bravely fights its corner however.

Our interest in 'The White Kirk' stems from the fact that the church was an important 'little' church (as opposed to a cathedral) on the northern pilgrimage route.

Pilgrims were travellers;

Saint Botolph was the *patron saint* of travellers;

Saint Botolph's cult was carried by travellers both from his C7 base at Icanho,

and from his eponymous C11 wool-trade base at Boston (aka Botolph's Town) in Lincolnshire;

His cult spread northwards (to Scotland), eastwards (to Scandinavia) and southwards as well.

The White Kirk was founded in late C11 and at one stage in its life (perhaps in C12) its walls were whitewashed over. The inference is that the whitewashing made the church show up like a beacon to guide towards it (amongst others) the pilgrims who plied their piety between St Andrews and Santiago de Compostela.



It is perhaps appropriate at this point that we refresh our memories regarding the principle dates concerning these two pilgrimage sites of the shrines of St Andrew and St James (aka San Iago).²

St Andrews

c. 597 – The *cult of St Andrew* was first brought to Britain by St Augustine who built churches dedicated to his name in Rochester and Hexham.

c. 761 – Legend relates that St Andrew's relics arrived at Kilrymont (later re-titled St Andrews).

c. 1070 – Construction of the Church of St Rule (aka St Regulus – the legendary transporter of the relics) at Kilrymont.

c. 1158 – Beginning of the construction of the cathedral dedicated to St Andrew.

c. 1318 – Completion of the construction of St Andrews Cathedral.

c. 1512 – Pilgrimage ceased as the Reformation approached.³

² Iago is derived from the Hebrew name 'Jacob'.

³ Herkless, J & Hannay, R. 1905. *College of St.*

Leonard: being documents with translations, notes and historical introductions, Edinburgh, i, p.472.

Santiago di Compostela

C7 – The *cult of St James* first appears in Spain.

c. 829 – Construction of the first church on the recently discovered site of the tomb of St James.

c. **1075** – The church was deemed a cathedral and construction work began on the building we see today.

c. 1100 – Now an important place of pilgrimage the site was upgraded to an archiepiscopal see.

c. 1211 – The new cathedral was finally consecrated. Pilgrimage continues to this day.

It can be seen from the above that the two cults – sited in places separated by 1,000 miles as the crow flies, (or perhaps 1,500 miles as the pilgrim walks) - both started the major part of their careers in the 1070s. We should also remember the contemporary acclamation that the two cathedrals (St Andrews and Santiago) were *the only ones which housed the relics of an apostle of Christ*.

Although many people are known to have made their pilgrimage to St Andrews as an act of penitence, it is for us, pertinent to note⁴ that *the only penitential pilgrim whose name has survived in the records, was a cleric from Dunkirk called (would you believe it?) Wille **Bondolf** who made his penitential journey there in 1333.*

The attraction which caused pilgrims to divert their travels towards the Whitekirk region (then known as *Hamer*) was a well. History records that in C13 reports started to come in of miracles occurring at a St Baldred's⁵ Well⁶ shown in the picture below as 'Our Lady's Well' (see footnote).



⁴ Peter Yeoman, *Pilgrimage in Medieval Scotland* (London: Batsford, 1999), 69.)

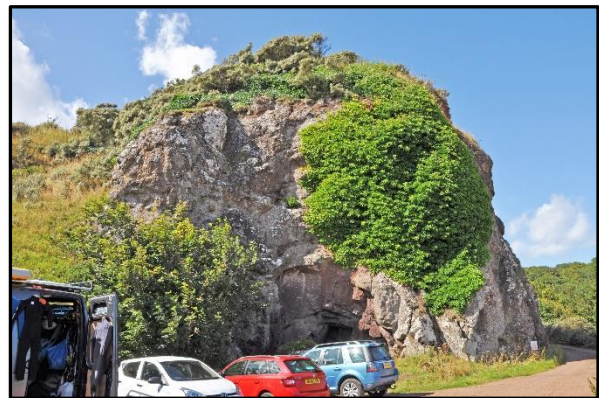
⁵ Baldred (aka Balthere of Tynningame) - a hermit based in East Lothian – died 756. Known as 'The Apostle of the Lothians'.

⁶ I have found mention of two St Baldred's Wells in this region and some say that the Whitekirk one was not dedicated to Baldred at all, but to the Virgin Mary – hence the dedication of the church.

It is suggested that the well was initially named after St Baldred (florit C7-8), but that it later had its name changed when Saint Mary's Church came into existence.



Somewhat serendipitously - on our travels just before visiting Whitekirk, we were driving alongside a secluded beach ...



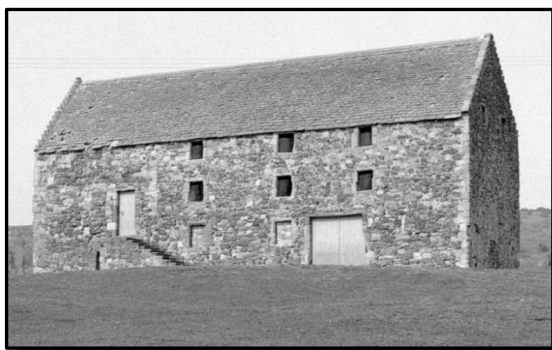
... when we happened across a cave which immediately attracted my attention.



At that stage I had never heard of St Baldred and I saw no sign indicating that this was his former home, but St Baldred's Cave it later proved to be. The rock in the sea (shown in the first of these three pictures) looks from the shore like a gigantic seal's head popping out of the water. It is called *Bass Rock*, and was apparently the location of Baldred's summer residence.

Meanwhile, back at Hamer, stories of the miracles occurring at the well were still being promulgated, and it was this that soon led to the building of a church, and the development of a small village. The church was subsequently painted white⁷ to enhance even further the numbers of pilgrims coming to make their votive payments. The villagers' initial financial joy was short-lived however, as in 1356 King Edward III saw fit to confiscate the proceeds.

The flow of pilgrims had by then become **well-established**(!) however, and in the year 1413 '15,653 pilgrims of all nations' passed through the little village. In contrast to his predecessor Edward III, James I of Scotland (ruled 1424-1437) was both supportive (he held land nearby at Innerwick), and far-sighted with the consequence that he built hostels to accommodate the pilgrims and placed the church itself under his personal protection.



Tithe Barn, Whitekirk – originally one of the 'Pilgrims' Houses' (picture courtesy of CANMORE).

In 1439 Adam Hepburn,⁸ Master of Hailes (a manse on the outskirts of Edinburgh) contributed to the fortunes and fabric of The White Kirk by building its vaulted choir; the church maintained its importance until the Reformation.

Sadly, in more recent times, its fortunes took a downward turn when on the 26th February 1914 the church went up in flames, sabotaged, it is said, by members of the Suffragette movement in retaliation for one of their number, Ethel

⁷ I do wonder of what material the first church on this site was built – and whether it just *happened* to be white rather than the local pink sandstone.

⁸ Later Sheriff of Berwickshire.

Moorhead, being force-fed whilst in Carlton Prison.

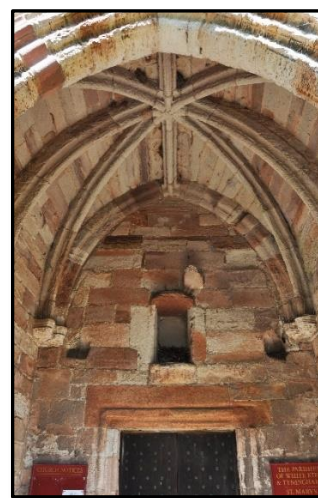
Nothing daunted, repair work began in 1917 under the direction of the Scottish architect and furniture designer Sir Robert Lorimer, and led to a happy conclusion.

It is James Tindal Soutter who tells us in the Church Service Society Annal 1936-1938-28-36, that the shrine was not called *Whitekirk* until C15, and that for more than a century before this it was known as the *Chapel of Fairknowe*, (Fairknowe being the name of the hill upon which the church sits) and earlier still was called *Hamer*.



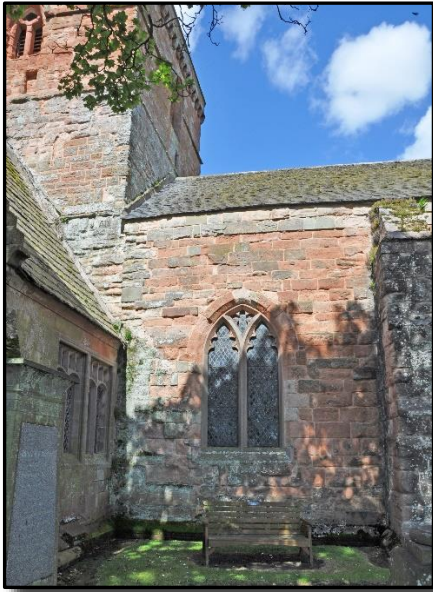
Whitekirk – the church and the village.

Returning to the church itself, I hope that readers will bear in mind that this church was heavily (but faithfully) restored in 1917, and that some of the structures which I describe and date, will in fact be modern replicas of the originals.

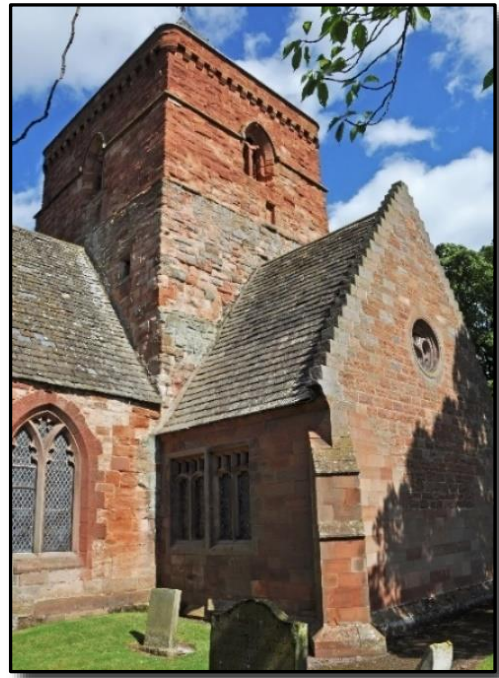


It is unusual to find a porch with a vaulted ceiling. Over the inner door a niche – now

occupied by a bird's nest but originally perhaps for a statue?



C15 square-topped windows in the porch with early C14 windows at the west end of the nave.



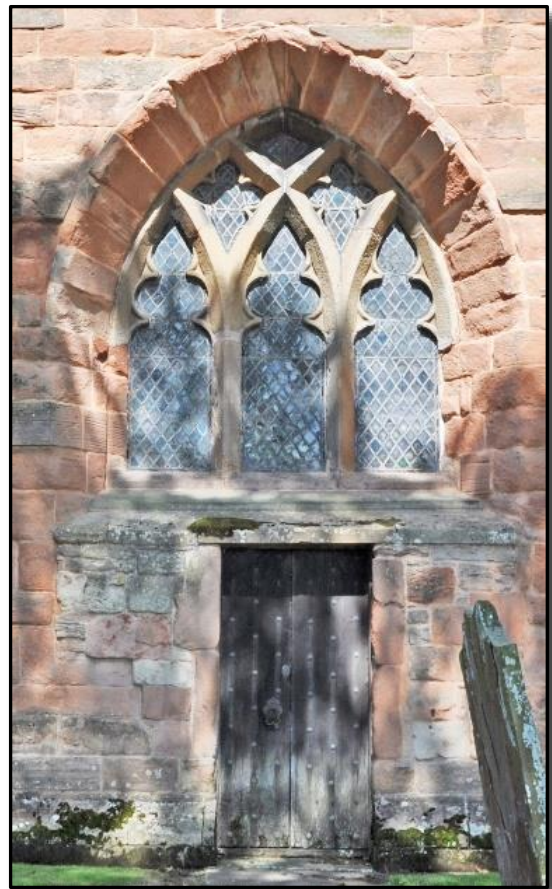
The mouchette is seen here on the face of the crowstepped gable of the southern transept. More square-topped C15-16 windows similar to those found in the porch, serve to illuminate the interior of the transept.



I have not found many mouchette windows in English Saint Botolph churches, and I was particularly pleased to spot this triple mouchette on the south face of the south transept.



'Mouchette' is the name given to a dagger-like motif pointed at one end, and round at the other, and is typically found as a component of windows of C14 churches. Translation of the French suggests that the mason or architect who first provided its name considered it to be shaped like a little fly.

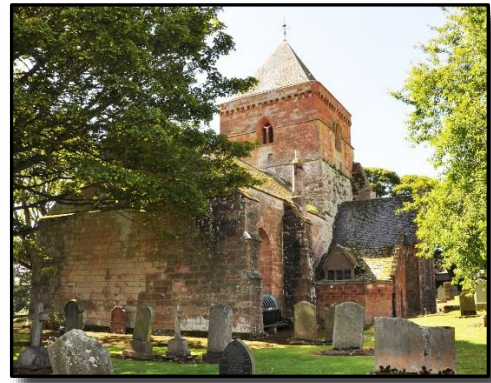


I hope that readers will be able to see past the blemishes in this image - caused by heavy mid-morning shadows - and note that the C14 window at the eastern end of the south wall has some unusual features.

The window's function is to provide light for the southern side of the chancel. It is unusually set on the *inner* edge of the wall rather than on the wall's outer edge, and the masonry has been flared to compensate for the restriction in light ingress caused by such an internal alignment. Furthermore the wall beneath seems to have suffered the assault of having a 'priests' door' clumsily punched through beneath the window.

Canmore tells us however that, inside the church, a wall had been built between the crossing and the chancel and that *'in the 17th century the nave and crossing were used as the place of worship and the chancel as a school. The doorway below the East window on the South wall of the chancel may well have been inserted at his time to provide external access to the school.'*

In fact taking the combination of the odd siting of the window and the doorway itself into account it would appear that when the time came to do this, the whole window would have been removed (it would have been double the height at this time), the doorway built, and then the window shortened and replaced in its centre-wall position.



A view from the northeast gives little hint of an east window, and yet there is one. A small circular window, of similar size to the mouchette we saw earlier, is hiding behind the leaves.



Picture of the east window - taken from inside the church (courtesy of CANMORE)



A view from the northwest.

Since I was unable to gain access to the interior of the church the following pictures come courtesy of CANMORE (part of Historic Environment Scotland).



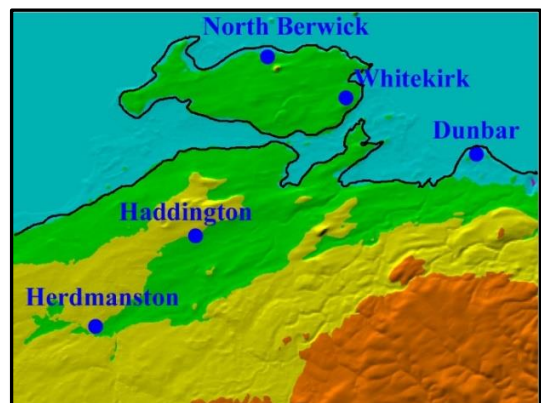
The 'clumsy' doorway beneath the easternmost window of the south wall of the chancel. The doorway is said to have been inserted in C17 to allow access to the chancel when it was converted into a schoolroom.



The nave looking west.

This concludes my discourse on the subject of The White Kirk. It has told us nothing directly about the cult of Saint Botolph in Scotland but it has shown that from C11 to C15 swathes of pilgrims were regularly being diverted through this part of East Lothian.

Herdmanston



Reverting to the copy of a picture shown earlier, we see above the geographical relationship between the high and low grounds of Whitekirk, Haddington and Herdmanston.

Of the three, it is the small hamlet of Herdmanston which has focussed our attention on this area. Whitekirk, as we now know, was an important rite of passage for pilgrims. Haddington is today the most important and wealthiest of the three sites, and Herdmanston holds the key of academic Botolphian interest. We find a copy of the Herdmanston Chapel's Kalendar in Alexander Forbes' book *Kalendars of the Scottish Saints*.⁹

KALENDARIUM DE HYRDMANISTOUN.		41
JULIUS.		
	Regularis feriat. vi.	
	Regularis lunat. xii.	
	Denus paleficit quindenus federa nescit.	
	Scti Nichomemis maf. iiii fe & Ce d.	
xix f iiii	Sctoy Marcellini & petri maf. iiii fe & Ce d. [Inuitat dupl.]	
viii d iiii		
vii a ii		
v b	Sancti Bonetacii epi & maf. iiii fe & Ce d. [Inuitat dupl.]	
iiii c viii	Ultim ⁹ termin ⁹ pentecostes.	
iiii d viii		
ii c vi	Sctoy egedardi & eplardi epoy (& Scti Willii epi & confessor eborac.) iiii fe & Ce d.	
f v	Id Crankfo scti eadmundi archiepi. [Prim ⁹ & feliciani	
r d iiii	infm. Inuitat duplex.] Dies mala hora .v ^o .	
a iiii	Id Scti Barnabe apst.	
xviii b ii	Id Sctoy Basilidis Cirini Naboris & Nazarii maf. iiii fe	
vii c iiii	& Ce d. Inuitat duplex.]	
d xvi	Id Julii. Scti Basilii epi. [Sollicitium.] iiii fe & Ce d.	
xv c xvi	Id Sctoy Citi & modesti maf. [Inuitat duplex.]	
iiii f xvi	Id Sctoy Cyriaci & Julite maf. Dies mala hora .iiii ^o .	
c xv	Id Scti Botulphi abdis. [Dedicatio eccleie bi Andree de haliburton. mem.]	
xiii a xiiii	Id Sctorum marci & marcelliani maf. Sol in cancro. [Inuit duplex.]	
i b xiiii	Id Sctorum Geruasi & pthasi maf. [Ite Margarete regine. Inuit duplex.]	
c xii	Id Scti Eadwardi reg ⁹ & maf transfo. [Inuit duplex.]	
ix d xi	Id Scti Albani maf. ix fe.	
c x	Id Scti Etheldrede virg. viij. iiii fe cii d.	
xviii f ix	Id Mariuitas scti Johis bapte. dupl fest.	
vi d viii		
a viii	Id Sctorum Johis & pauli maf. [Scti duthaci epi & cōc.]	
xviii b vi		
iiii c v	Id Scti leonis pp. iiii fe cii d.	
d iiii		

In the highlighted lines - against the date of *xv kl* (fifteenth kalends) - of July (we see *Julij* written three lines above the highlighted area)¹⁰ we read:

Saint Botolph abbot. [Church dedication bi Andree de Haliburton. Mem.]

In other words, the kalendar's schedule tells us that on each 17th June, the Mass at this chapel included a reading of the *Vita Sancti Botolphi*. It also contains the information that **Andree de Haliburton, of glorious memory, dedicated this church ...** The entry seems to be telling us that the dedication was made on Saint Botolph's Day and that the kalendar requires that Andree de Haliburton's action on this day is remembered

⁹ Forbes, Alexander, *Kalendars of the Scottish Saints* (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1872).

¹⁰ In the terms of yesteryear **15 Kalends July** means fifteen days before the first of July which, counting backwards and including both end dates, brings us to Saint Botolph's day on the 17th June.

annually. – so can we assume that this chapel was dedicated to Saint Botolph?

In the preface to his work, Forbes writes:

The ... kalendar ... of Herdmanston ... is from an antiphonary, in a good hand of the thirteenth century ... The psalter is in a larger hand ... the volume was in use ... in the family of the gifted St Clairs of Herdmanston. On the upper margin... in thirteenth-century hand, "Iste liber est Johannis de Sco. Claro de capella sua de Hyrdmanniston"¹¹ ... which chapel, in the parish of Salton and county of Haddington was founded by John de St. Clair early in the thirteenth century.

We drove to Herdmanston to see the chapel and the (perhaps fortified) manse which originally belonged to John de St Clair and his successors.



We found the farmhouse of this fairly isolated community and there met a charming young lady who, it transpired, was Mrs Waddell – the farmer's wife and she was conversant with some details of the history of the farm and the old manse. The chapel, she told me, still existed and was behind the farmhouse but sadly, as the beasts were in the field, I would not be able to get close to it.

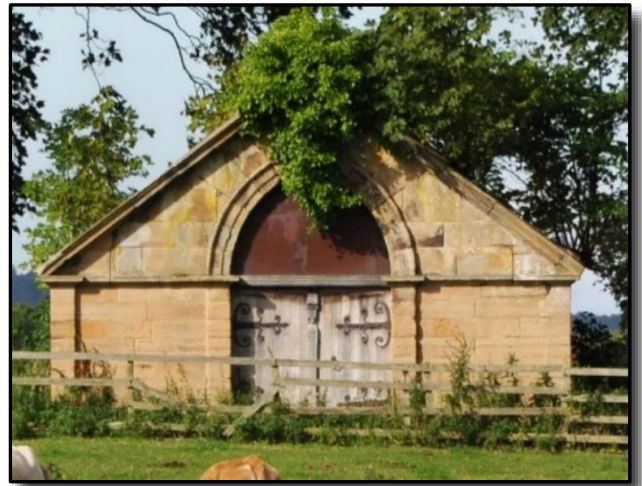


¹¹ Which translates to: 'This book is John de St.Clair's (aka John Sinclair) from his chapel of Hyrdmanniston'

She introduced me to a book entitled *Lost East Lothian* by Craig Statham in which there were pictures of Herdmanston. The old house is long since gone, having been demolished in May 1969 after it was rendered uninhabitable following occupation by the military during the Second World War. Statham's book tells us that the southern wing of the house was built around a strong keep dating from C11.



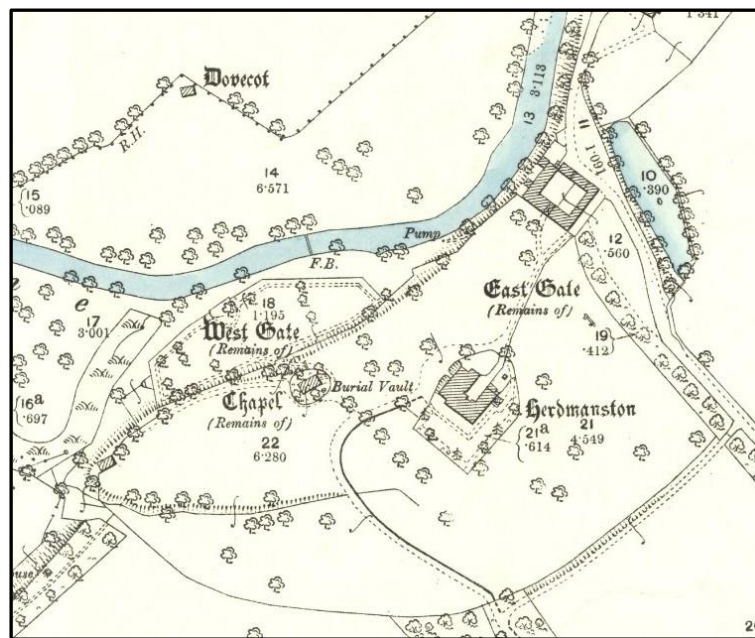
I went to have a look at the field and rapidly concluded that discretion was the better part of valour on this occasion. Nothing daunted, I contented myself with trusting my camera's telephoto lens to get a picture from afar.



The wonderful hinges and massive sandstone ashlars of the building left me in no doubt that this was the real thing.



The chapel site dates back to C13 but this stoup (now in Edinburgh at the National Museum of Scotland) was found inside the building and dates from a century earlier.



Herdmanston, (Courtesy of The National Library of Scotland).

Despite the suggestion in the Herdmanston kalendar that the chapel was dedicated to Saint Botolph, records tell us that it is considered to be dedicated to Saint John the Baptist. This is not entirely surprising because the latter's patronal festival is on 24th July, just seven days after Saint Botolph's Day. This is sheep country however, and Botolph's patronage of the sheep trade makes a Botolphian dedication eminently plausible.

Local saints fell out of favour at the Reformation whereas 'Biblical' saints were just about acceptable. I have not read of a pre-Reformation fair or market being held here but it is not unlikely. Bearing in mind the 'label on the tin', Herdman's Town immediately suggests a site for drovers to bring their sheep from outlying districts to be sold. The Saint Botolph's Fairs were famous for this.

Far from disputing a dedication of the chapel to Saint Botolph, its current attachment to John the Baptist rather confirms my earlier suspicions. It seems likely that in C16 for the sake of pacifying the law makers, the Saint Botolph connection was dropped and Saint John the Baptist substituted.

The annual sheep and cattle fairs could then continue to be held at the same time of year that they had always been without upsetting the authorities.

As always I will be pleased to hear any comments or corrections you may have regarding the above. denpepper@virginmedia.com

Zina and I wish you all a Very Happy
Christmas and a Very Happy and
Healthy 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 dp@botolph.info saying 'YES PLEASE.' If you wish to UNsubscribe then send the message 'NO THANKS.'

If you wish to purchase any of the books of the Botolph Trilogy please use the same email address.

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*.'

Types of Botolph Church sites:-

The list of classifications I use has been subject to constant revision over the past ten years. The current version, first revised in December 2020, is as follows:

1. A church on a site which might have been founded directly by St Botolph during his life or by his acolytes soon after his death.
 2. A church the original of which is thought to have been the product of Danish landowners (c.878-890, c.1016-1035).
 3. A church originating from and as a result of Monastic Revival (c. 950 - 1016).
 4. A church which, even if it had a humble predecessor on the same site, mainly blossomed as a result of opulence gained from the wool trade (c. 1150-1450).
 5. A church lying on or close to one of the major ancient trackways, rivers, Roman roads or city gates, the proximity of which merits the suspicion that a major aspect of the function of the church has for a long while been closely linked with long-distance travel.
 6. A church lying on or close to a pilgrimage route. Churches roles have always needed to be flexible. The **Type 6** classification takes into account the increased influence of pilgrimage that occurred from late C12.
- * A star is added to the 'Type' when the church lies on a county border.

Changing functionalitv.

One church will often have fulfilled many roles during its lifetime so a 'type' will often be transient and need to be defined by dates.

Typical Characteristics of early St Botolph Churches.

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

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