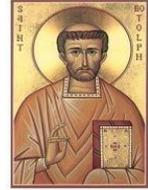




# The Botolphian

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: 85 **2020 – the 1400<sup>th</sup> anniversary (circa) of St Botolph's birth** 1st June 2020

## Highlights this month

- **St Botolph's church, Northfleet, Kent.**
- It gives me great pleasure to welcome as new members: Rosemary Feuell from Cambridge; Wendy Waller from St Botolph's, Northfleet, Kent and James Ratcliffe from St Botolph's Allerthorpe, Yorkshire.
- Correspondence from Tony Connolly, Jane Micklethwaite and many others.

## Editorial

Since we are this year celebrating the (circa) 1,400th anniversary of St Botolph's birth, the time might be ripe for him to be re-validated as the Patron **Saint of Travellers**. He has, in fact, never been relieved of this position but was eclipsed by the mythical St Christopher in C13 when *Jacob de Voragine* compiled his book *Golden Legends (Legenda Aurea)*. In C15, following the invention of the printing press, the Golden Legends became the most widely read book in Europe after the Bible. One of its attractions was that much of its drama was born of the fertile imagination of the writer rather than being based on fact. The story of St Christopher was an example of this and it was directly as a result of the *Legenda's* marketing success that, usurping St Botolph, he rose (from about 1450) to the lofty position of Patron Saint of Travellers.

In 1969 the Roman Catholic Church, while tidying their calendar, reviewed his status and, influenced perhaps by the fact that he was a 'saint of straw', decided to remove him from their calendar - although his feast day continues to be celebrated in certain localities.

From this point of view, to be fair, he is not a lot different from our saint in that St Botolph does not feature in the regular Anglican calendar either –

although his feast day on 17th June (25th June in Scotland) is regularly celebrated by choice.

Unlike St Christopher, St Botolph was a real person and there is ample evidence supporting his long claim to the title. Whenever he is mentioned by knowledgeable writers they nearly always cite the churches dedicated to his name at the gates of such places as Cambridge and Colchester as well as those at the London portals of Aldersgate, Bishopsgate, Aldgate and Billingsgate. We need labour the point no further. ***Saint Botolph IS the Patron Saint of Travellers.***

## Church Feature

# N

## orthfleet, Kent



**Approach:** Drive north up Springhead Road to the junction with Dover Road and London Road and as you drive down The Hill into Northfleet you will see the church on your left. Parking is available nearby.

**Key:** Wendy Waller (Churchwarden and Chairman of the PCC) Tel: 07948 095-109.  
Pauline Hickmott (Churchwarden) Tel: 07732 653-358.

**Associate Priest:** Father Cyril Showers.

At present the church is going through a difficult time having lost two priests in quick succession. Father Cyril is living at St Mark's Vicarage but covering St Botolph's too with the aid of Father Joe King.

**Location:** (This refers to the site of the parking area near the church gate): The Hill, Northfleet, DA11 9EX. 51.44118, 0.336064,

**Church Website:**

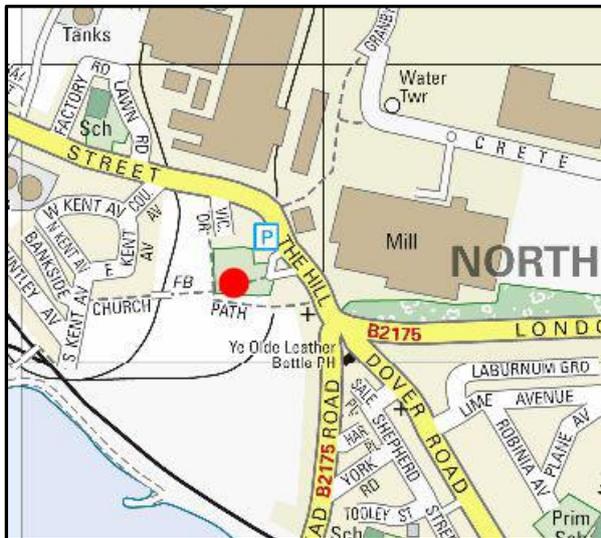
<http://stbotolphnorthfleet.org.uk>.

**Website Administrator:** Amanda Horrobin (amanda\_horrobin@hotmail.co.uk).

**The Benefice:** St Botolph's Northfleet and St Mark's Rosherville

**Facebook:** St Botolphs Church Northfleet

**Listed Grade:** I



I took the following picture from the train because I was incensed by what I consider to be the disgraceful circumstances in which Northfleet has been left.

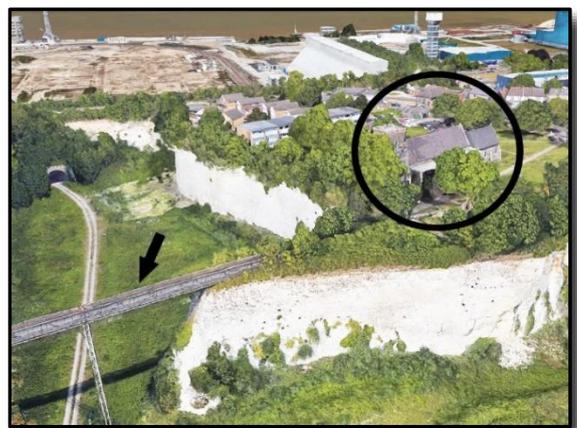


Once part of Kent's green and pleasant land of rolling hills, the quarriers, in C19, moved in, greedily slicing away at its foothills until it looked like the remains of a Christmas cake on Twelfth Night. In Northfleet's case it was not a figurine of Father Christmas that prevented the final slice being taken but the presence of the little church, which now perches atop a 70 ft precipice.

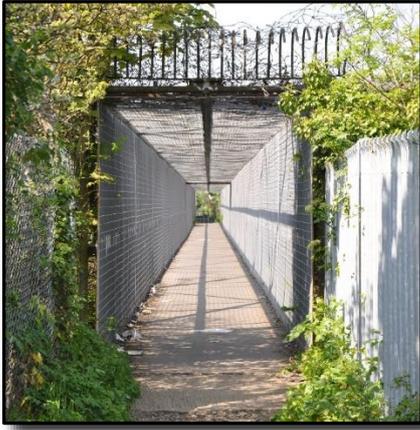
In yesteryear one could have strolled westwards from the church through a cherry orchard known as Vineyard Field before finding oneself at Northfleet House. Today communication with the neighbouring houses to the west involves crossing a footbridge as seen in the pictures both above and below.

The quarriers were the owners of the cement works – initially *Portland Cement* operated by Frost from 1833. In 1851 Knight, Bevan and Sturge took over and in 1876 Thomas Bevan became the sole owner. In 1900 the works became part of the *Blue Circle Cement Group*.

I suppose we must acknowledge that this was part of the industrialisation that made Britain great but even so, unless they had no hearts at all, these men must surely have seen the damage they were doing to the countryside.



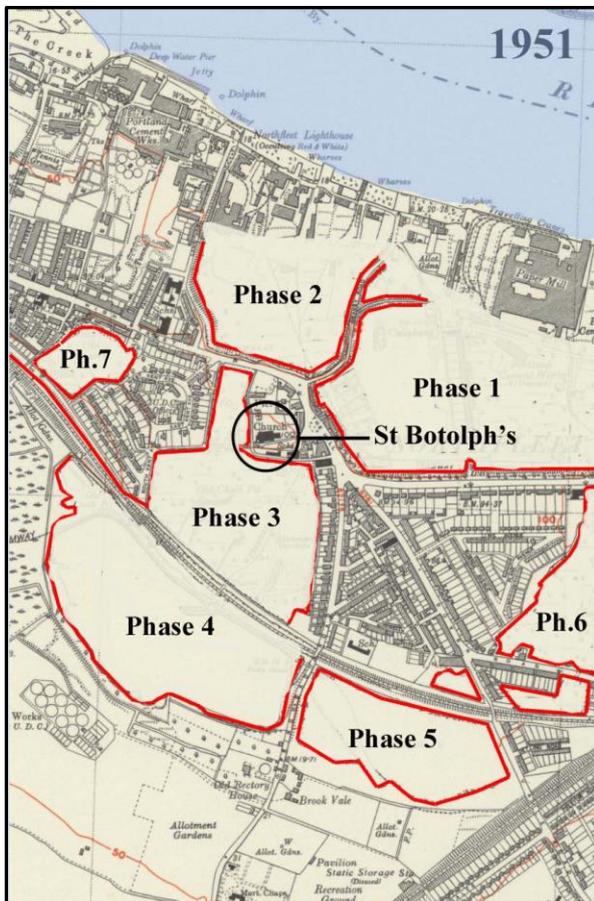
Above, St Botolph's church is seen ringed, and below, the bridge is totally enclosed.



I dare say that local people are so used to it that they do not give it a second thought.

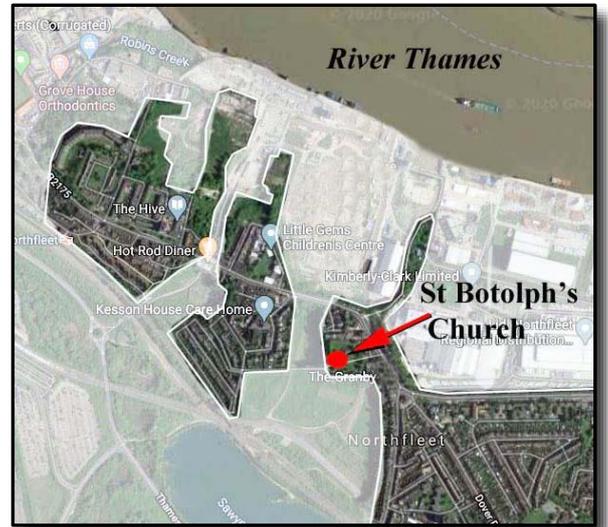


As you cross, you are afforded the opportunity to glance back and look at the wastelands below.



I guess and hope that residents love and take pride in their town and find that benefits have accrued from the quarrying. It is for these people who live here now that I moderate the expression of my feelings.

The ‘munching monsters’ carried out their work in several phases, starting north of the town and then – perhaps almost unexpectedly – attacking in a rearguard action from the south.



This was the ultimate result – a narrow isthmus leading to two islands suspended over a sea of chalk rubble and industry.

I was fortunate to grow up in the lovely old city of Rochester (the Roman *Durobrivae*) which lies just 9 miles southeast of Northfleet. The first time I remember getting to Northfleet was as a toddler when, one sunny day, my father was driving us in our Austin 7 Ruby Saloon close to the banks of the river where the chimneys of the cement works were belching white smoky steam into the summer sky.

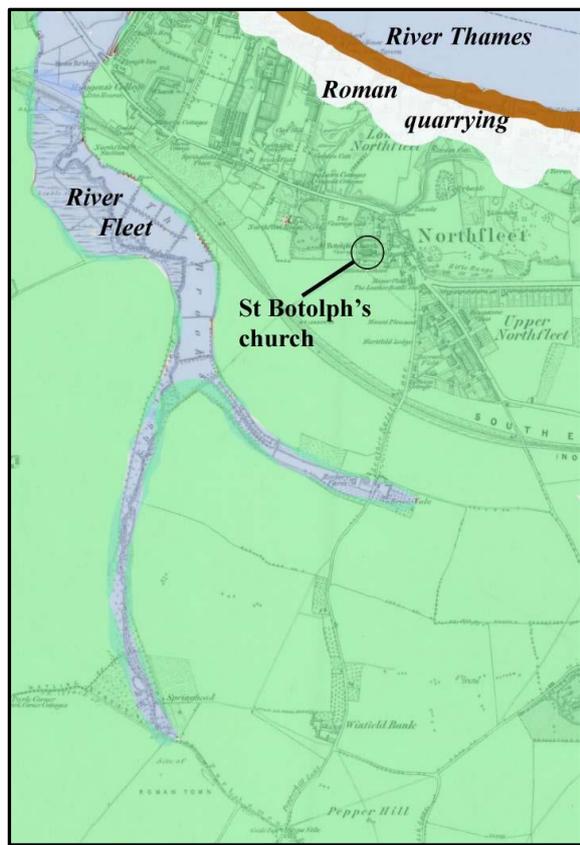
“Ooh look mummy . . . a *cloud* factory!”

The cement works have all closed down now and had I not become involved with Saint Botolph I would probably never have thought much about Northfleet again. Little did I realise in 1947 that in order to produce their ‘clouds’ the chimneys were monster-beasts feeding greedily on part of England’s green and pleasant land which, once eaten, would be forever lost.

It is *only* St Botolph’s church and its heritage that now remains to provide some clue to the beauty of Northfleet in its heyday.

During my research for *Volume III of the Saint Botolph Trilogy* I delved back to see how the countryside would have appeared in the seventh

century expecting that the degradation would have been a gradual process stretching over many centuries. As it turned out, I only had to look back as far as an Ordnance Survey Map of 1859 before I found Northfleet's past glory.



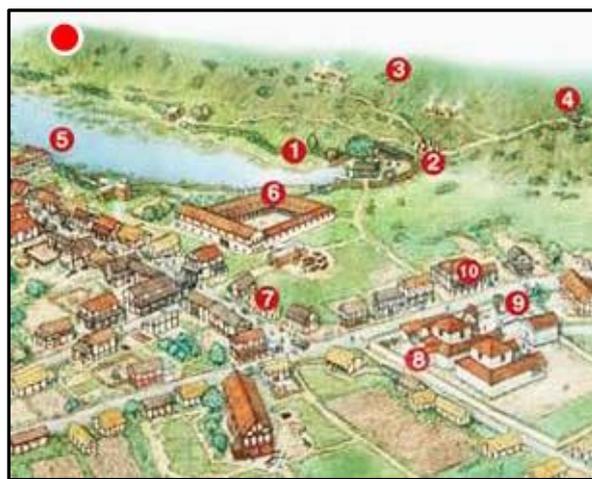
The partly-conjectural picture above is based on a 'pre-quarry' 1859 map highlighted to illustrate the pastoral scene before it was blighted by industry. The River Fleet (now called Ebbsfleet) is shown in the width it might have occupied in Roman times.

By 1797 the 'Roman quarrying' shown above, had extended, as Edward Hasted tells us "*close to the northern side of the village, about a quarter of a mile in width to the shore of the Thames; the digging, making, and exporting the chalk and lime from them is of the greatest advantage to this county, and employs a great number of labouring people, for from hence and this neighbourhood not only London and the adjacent country, but even Holland and Flanders, are supplied either with lime, or with chalk to make it; besides which, the rubbish of the chalk is bought, and fetched away by lighters and hoys, and carried to all the ports and creeks in the opposite county of Essex, and even to Suffolk and Norfolk, and sold there for*

*the manure of the lands; thus this barren chalky soil contributes to make the strong clay lands of those counties rich and fertile, and this mixture of earth forms a composition, which out of two, otherwise barren extremes, make one prolific medium.*"<sup>1</sup>

In the same document Hasted writes: "*Philipott says, it was the report of the country in his time, that the valley, through which the stream or fleet above mentioned flows, which he calls Ebbsfleet, was once covered with water, and being locked in on each side with hills, made a secure road for shipping, which induced the Danes to make it a winter station for their navy.*" [Ed: If this had happened at all it would probably have been during the Danish Invasion of 892. Current history tells us that they overwintered in encampments at Appledore and at Milton (both in Kent) but there is no mention of Northfleet].

The Romans favoured the area for its natural peace and beauty and in the first century A.D. had developed a major religious centre close to the springhead of the River Fleet. They called it *Vagniacae*. A substantial stone temple was built there and remained in use for two hundred years.



The above illustration, by Donato Spedalieri © BBC History Magazine, shows the Springhead sacred site. The key which goes with it is as follows:

1. Sacred pool believed to have healing properties.
2. Sanctuary complex: site of two shrines, a ritual bath, pits and a sacred oak.
3. Viewing platforms that served as picnic areas.
4. Ritual shaft: human and animal remains suggest the legacy of Celtic beliefs.

<sup>1</sup> Edward Hasted, 'Parishes: Northfleet', in *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent: Volume 3* (Canterbury, 1797), pp. 302-318. *British History Online*

<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-kent/vol3/pp302-318> [accessed 6 May 2020].

5. Murals decorate a two-story temple near the pool.
6. Poolside Hotel.
7. Watling Street, which forks left en route to Dover.
8. Fertility temple.
9. Tall column bearing a statue of the Celtic sky god on horseback.
10. Small temple, where evidence of child sacrifices has been found.

In the top left hand corner, the red dot indicates the position of Northfleet's St Botolph's church several centuries later.

A piece of dialogue from *Volume III of the Botolph Trilogy* where sub-king Aethelwald of Kent's man Olred is taking Botolph and Luka to find a site suitable to build a monastery:

"This is Waceling Street," declared Olred, "- the great street built by the Romans, which runs from Rutupiae," (he waved his hand to the right), "to Mercia," (he waved his hand to the left). And that," (he pointed forwards), "is the Roman's Vagniacis - or 'Springhead' as we call it today on account of the fact that the pool in the middle is fed from eight springs."

"What's that structure over there?" asked Luka, pointing to one side.

"Those are the temple ruins," said Olred.

"No, I mean the tall column," said Luka.

"Oh - that's the goddess Epona," said Olred, "A lot of local people still worship her - she's the goddess of fertility, and they come and bathe in the stream and pray to her. Come on. I'll show you one of the places where the king thought you might like to build your monastery."

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By 1800, the Northfleet shipyards were producing many fine vessels.



Between 1788 and 1860 Thomas Pitcher's yard built more than 25 ships for the East and West Indies service and a similar number for the Royal

Navy. The first construction was the *Royal Charlotte* of 1252 tons.



The days of the dockyard are honoured by the presence of this model in the nave of St Botolph's church. The note reads: *Model of an 'East Indiaman' as built at Pitcher's Dockyard Northfleet. This was built by a local craftsman, Jessie Clements, and given to St Botolph's. It was recently re-rigged at Chatham Dockyard.*

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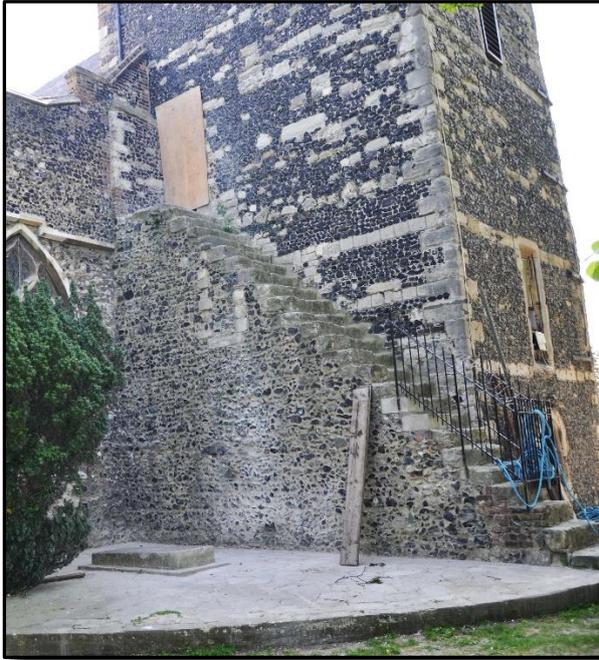
The above, I hope, sets the scene and provides background information regarding the Northfleet and its St Botolph's church that we see today.

The **nave** was built in 1330 on the site previously occupied by a Saxon church - and of course it is the earlier church - and perhaps its predecessor(s) - in which we are ultimately interested. One of the first things we might notice about the church is how large it is. Indeed, at 166ft x 66 ft it is one of the largest churches in the Rochester diocese. The chancel dates from 1370 (as does the rood screen). There was then, a 40 year period when the high altar would have been at the east end of the nave.

The original tower was built in 1080 but collapsed in 1628 due, it is thought, to lack of adequate foundations.



Today's tower (which can only be viewed from outside the church) was constructed *inside* the old tower in 1717. Here we see the south side . . .

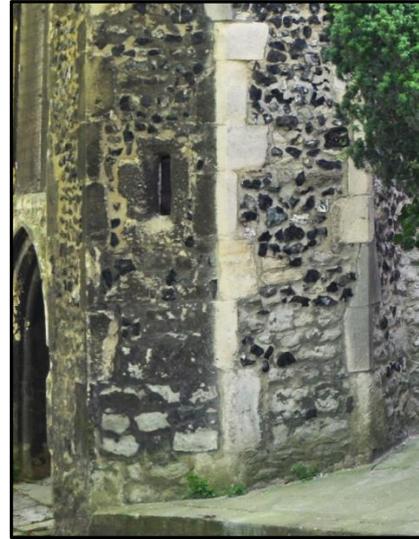


. . . and here the north side.

Halfway up the wall of the outer tower, the remains of a window can be seen. Above that is wooden shuttering which presumably secures the entrance to the belltower.



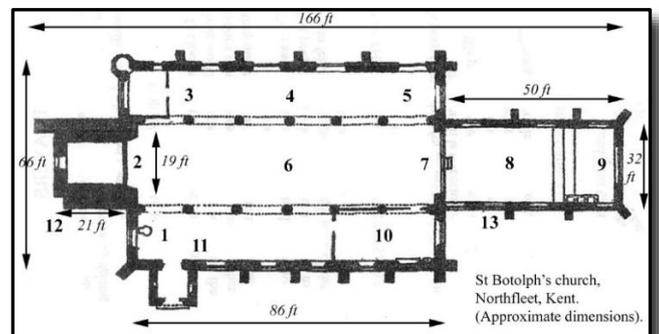
But at the northwest corner is an unusually-placed hexagonal tower which presumably houses a stairway and, via a gallery, would have provided access to the original belltower.



It is made even more unusual by having 'long and short' stonework which identifies it as being of Saxon construction. Sadly I have been unable to study it closely but I can see no evidence of the lower section of this little tower every having been rebuilt. This suggests to me that it was possibly the northwest corner of a bell tower and that the new C14 church was not built directly on top of the earlier one. I will reserve judgement on this until I am able to re-visit the church.

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The following comments have been cribbed directly from Northfleet's very useful little church guide entitled 'Twelve Things to see'. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic they are *not* available 'to see' at the present time, so I submit this draught form with a view to my visiting St Botolph's Northfleet as soon as lockdown is lifted and taking more photographs. I will then, for those of you who print this newsletter (I understand that many do so) send a supplementary email with the updated sheets for you to substitute.





1. Once through the south doorway we find the **C14 font** on our left. In C18 it had been moved to the 'christening pew' in the north aisle but was returned to its position near the south doorway in 1850. In 1865 it was desecrated and so removed from the church until 1937.



2. The painting on the west wall, the **Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary**, is the work of N.J.H. Westlake of the firm Lavers, Barraud and Westlake. Between 1872 and 1876 this company restored the stained glass windows to an exceedingly high standard. Below the painting are some columns which are all that remain of the Norman church that stood on the site.



3. The **parish chest** is thought to be that which was bequeathed to the parish by William Lyle in 1391.

4. Two monuments in the north aisle: The Fortyre (???) Memorial erected in 1694 and the Crich monument to Richard (d.1709) and Esther (d.1705). Their burial slabs lie under the adjacent pews.



5. The **Andrew Chapel** contains two fine C15 perpendicular windows (the remainder in the church are C14) and stained glass inserted at the end of C19. This is the church's 'children's chapel'.



6. The **nave** dates from 1330 and was built over the site of the stone Saxon church. The pews date from 1850 when they replaced the old box pews. The nave was restored in 1862 by Edward Godwin (see notes following) who raised the level of the floor.



7. **The Rood Screen** is the oldest to be found in a parish church in Kent. It was constructed in 1370 and originally had solid oak doors and a rood above.



The defaced faces of Christ and the Apostles can be seen on the chancel side and below those on the left is the parish mouse!



8. The **chancel** was built in 1370 and restored by Edward Godwin in 1862. It contains fine encaustic tiling and other decorations, particularly in the Godwin style.



8a. The **brasses** of Peter de Lacey (Rector 1356-1375), William Lyle (Rector 1390 to 1391) and William and Katherine Rykill who lived at Instead Rise are all that remain of 19 medieval brasses originally in the church.



9. The **East Window** was erected in memory of Prince Albert. Designed by Godwin it was made by Milner-Allen and Lavers and Barraud. Mary, John, Peter and Botolph flank Christ tended on the Cross by Mary Magdalene. Above is a

representation of part of the Book of Revelation. Botolph's representation bears a good likeness to the architect Edward Godwin!



10. In the **Lady Chapel** the Sedilia and Piscina are both original and, as the heads were not representations of the saints, they were left intact by the Puritans.



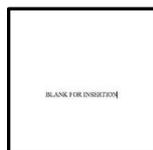
Part of the Sedilia was cut away in C18 to provide heating for the local squire's box pew.



11. The ancient **Holy Water Stoop** still exists by the south door to enable those baptised to remember their baptism when entering church.



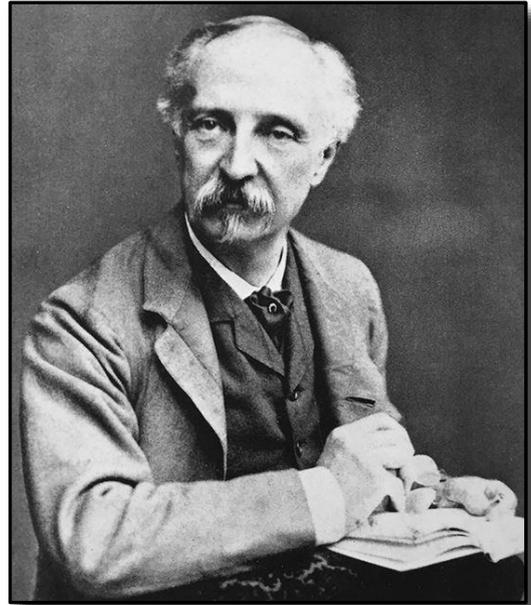
12. The **Tower** can only be seen from outside the building. The base is Norman but after collapse in early C17 it was rebuilt in 1717. There are eight bells hung on the original oak frame the oldest having been cast in 1757, three in 1758, two in 1817 and the youngest pair in 1920. On the south side of the Tower can be seen Saxon 'long and short' work which is the only visible part of the original church.



13. Outside the building near the blocked priest's door are **mass dials** dating from C14.

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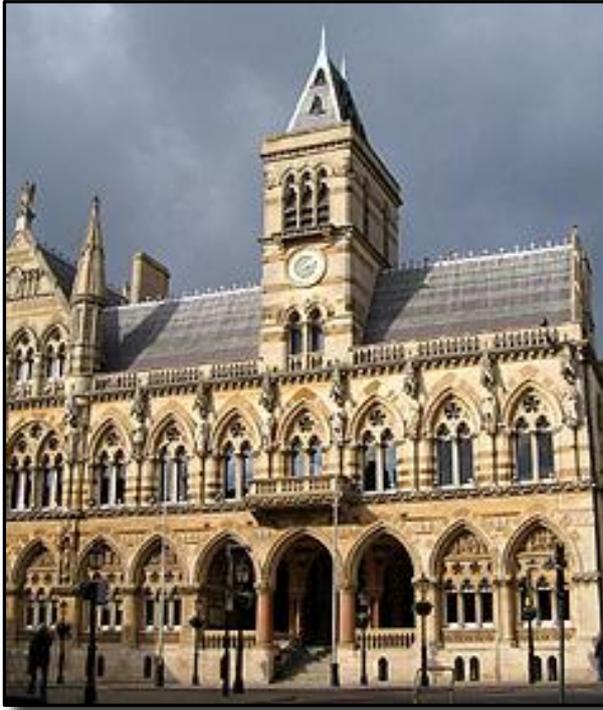
We should not move on without saying a little more about the architect Edward Godwin (1833-1886).



Like many extraordinary men he died at a young age – in his case at 53 years. He was famous for many novel designs including furniture in the *English Aesthetic Movement* style which drew its inspiration mainly from Japan. Below is a picture of one of his sideboards.



Just down the road from where I live is the town of Appledore (which, incidentally, was the winter quarters of the invading Danes in 892 – and, incidentally, like Northfleet was the home to an important shipyard). Next to Appledore is Smallhythe Place where lived the famous actress *Dame Ellen Terry* (1847-1928) whose eminently famous career spanned nearly seven decades. She and Godwin had a 6-year liaison during which time they created two children. She and Godwin moved in artistic circles which did nothing but good to his flourishing career. In 1877 he was commissioned by the painter James Whistler to build a house in Tite Street, Chelsea.



Another of his designs was the magnificent ‘Ruskinian Gothic’ Guildhall in Northampton. Smallhythe place is now a National Trust property and well worth a visit.

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#### Classification of St Botolph’s Northfleet.

At the time of the Norman Conquest and again at Domesday (1086) Northfleet belonged to the Archbishop of Canterbury – as had probably been the case since C7. Domesday recorded one church there and there can be little doubt that this was St Botolph’s.

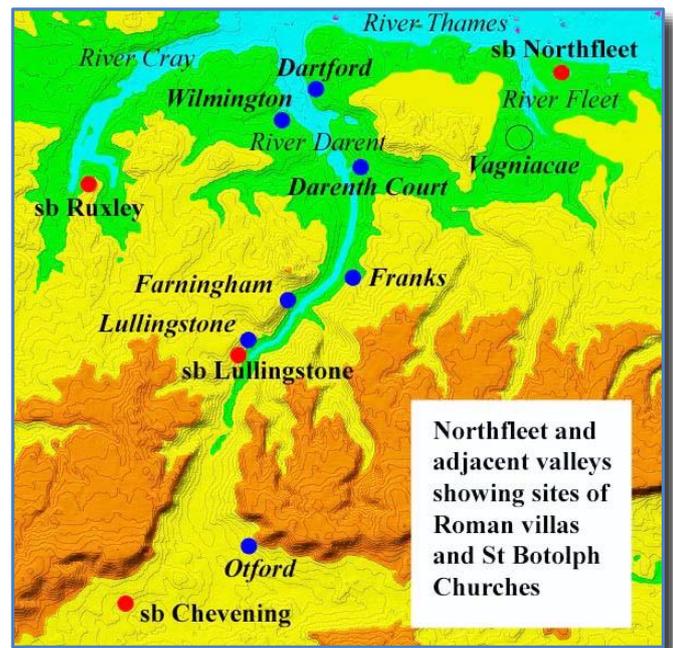
The church literature suggests that, as well as the C14 church which we see today, there was both a Norman (C11?) and a Saxon predecessor (C10?) both of which were built in stone.

This begs the question of whether the stone Saxon church (built perhaps during the Danish period), was the first on the site — or whether there had been earlier wooden church.

In support of the latter hypothesis we can see from a map of the Darent and Cray Valleys that Northfleet was but one of a cluster of four St Botolph churches. As mentioned in *The Botolphian* - issue number 81 of February 2020, the Roman villa at Lullingstone contained, from C4, a Christian house-church. The national heritage guide writes: *Our knowledge of the site after AD 400 is sparse. It produced some Anglo-Saxon potsherds and a magnificent hanging bowl*

<sup>2</sup> Francis Seymour Stevenson (24 November 1862 – 9 April 1938) was a British Liberal Party politician, author and scholar. He was elected at the 1885 general election as Member of Parliament (MP) for Eye in Suffolk

*perhaps dating from C7 which may represent evidence of early post-Roman Christianity and high-status Anglo-Saxon burial in the area.*



We must wonder therefore if Christianity persisted in the area after Roman times and was ready to greet St Botolph if or when he passed through in C7. Alternatively, if St Botolph created a Christian brotherhood at Northfleet, was the evidence of Christianity that was found at Lullingstone associated with the missionary work of the brotherhood in the Darent Valley?

In my estimation of the date of foundation of the stone St Botolph’s church at **Ruxley**, I plumped for a Hanseatic connection and suggested C13 but left the door open for the fact that there might have been a C7 predecessor.

I felt that the **Lullingstone** church site dated from the Danish period between 800 and 1066 but that the **Chevening** site was probably contemporary with Botolph’s lifetime.

In the Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and Natural History, F.S. Stevenson<sup>2</sup> writes:

*‘Two journeys—two out of several—are stated to have been undertaken by St Botolph in the course of the twenty years to which the Schleswig Breviary refers. The first was to the banks of the Thames, where he built a church in honour of St Martin.’<sup>3</sup> In view of the close relation between Kent and East Anglia, the site should probably be sought on the Kentish side of the river, perhaps*

<sup>3</sup> This could refer to the site of St Martin’s church at the village of Eynsford – just across the river from Lullingstone. The existing building dates from C12.

near Northfleet, where a dedication to St Botolph supplies a connection.<sup>4</sup>

Church dedication clusters can of course develop for all sorts of reasons over a wide period of years and any conclusions we draw must, in the end, be put down to surmise. As a result of Viking vandalism, abetted by the Reformation, seventh century historical records of Kent are all but non-existent. My personal view is that St Botolph might well have spent some considerable time in the Northfleet area whilst on his way from Frankia to East Anglia and perhaps created a Christian community there.

The Archbishop of Canterbury's interest in Northfleet may well have been influenced by the profits he could make from the chalk quarries. On the other hand, St Botolph might have left a thriving seminary which the archbishop could annexe and expand. If we look in the Canterbury Cathedral Archives for evidence to support this, we will be disappointed. Their earliest records date from C8.

In conclusion I believe that it is likely that the site of St Botolph's church Northfleet is likely to have been founded by St Botolph himself in C7. This would give it an 'A' classification.

### Thanks

My sincere thanks to the anonymous writer of the church guide from which I cribbed unmercifully. This church is still hiding a lot of mysteries and I look forward to returning within the next couple of months. I hope that I shall be able to produce a supplement which will at last do St Botolph's Northfleet justice.

### Correspondence

**1. Tony Connolly** wrote from St Botolph's, Croxton Kerrial in response to my question regarding the progress of the history he is writing. He replied that, all being well, he hopes to publish in September. I am looking forward to reading his work.

**2. Various emails (all of which contained interesting snippets) from:** Marion Peel, Patricia Croxton-Smith, Roger Bell (Burlington Massachusetts), Jean Gibran (Boston Massachusetts), Duncan Hopkin, Christine Hayes, Dot Thorney and Heather Erguvanli. Thank you all.

**3. Jane Micklethwaite** contacted me from Quarrington to say that her father-in-law

Christopher Micklethwaite – a staunch supporter of the Society of Saint Botolph – had sadly died. I shall miss Christopher who was particularly keen that I pay a second visit to Quarrington and update the society's records of the church there. I hope, in his honour, to do that in due course.

#### 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](mailto:botolph@virginmedia.com) saying 'YES PLEASE.' If you wish to UNsubscribe then send the message 'NO THANKS.'

You will frequently see the 'twin' towns of *Boston* mentioned in these newsletters, - one in Lincolnshire and the other in Massachusetts USA. The relevance to the Society is that the name 'Boston' is 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: **Danish foundations:** between 800 and 1066
- C: **Travellers' churches.**  
(i) Founded before AD 800  
(ii) Founded between 800 and 1066  
(iii) Founded after the Norman Conquest.
- D: **Hanseatic churches** founded between 1150 and 1450 as a result of commercial enterprise.
- E: 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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For those having difficulty in obtaining my books, copies can be purchased directly from me:

**Volume I**, 'Botolph' (Folkestone: Earlsgate Publishing, 2010) ISBN 978-0-9567508-0-8 at £8.99 plus £3 p&p

**Volume II**, 'Brother Botolph and The Abbess' (Folkestone: Earlsgate Publishing, 2014) ISBN 978-0-9567508-1-5 at £12.99 plus £3 p&p.

or Volumes I and II together £17 plus £3 p&p.

**Volume III**, 'Botolph the Travelling Saint' (Folkestone: Earlsgate Publishing, 2019) ISBN 978-0-9567508-2-2 at £12.99 plus £3 p&p.

**or special price of £27** for the three books (which includes p&p).

Available from Earlsgate Publishing, 17 Cliffe House, 38 Radnor Cliff, Folkestone, Kent CT20 2TY. Tel: 01303 221-777.

Nationwide Bank: Sort code 07-02-46, Account Number: 45570161. Please draw cheques in favour of Dr D S Pepper.

<sup>4</sup> Proceedings of Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and Natural History. Volume XVIII Part 1 (1922) St Botolph (Botwulf) and Iken. p.4.