



**ST MARY & ST BOTOLPH, WHITTON
CHURCH HISTORY**

Man on the Moon

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Welcome to the church of St. Mary and St. Botolph in Whitton, Ipswich. In this small church, a place of beauty and quiet holiness, people have come to worship God for many hundreds of years.

Whitton Church for most of its history would have been in open countryside, very much a village church and indeed, remained so until the 1950s when Ipswich and its environs gradually spread further and further afield and Whitton became a suburb. A large housing estate was built which eventually reached right up to the church itself. The old rectory (now a private house) has had a large part of its garden and glebe land used for building houses and a roadway. The churchyard now borders onto the playing fields of Thurleston High School.

On the north side of the church is Whitton Church Lane with a rural aspect (a complete contrast to the very large housing estate). Open countryside like this would have been all around Whitton Church, which still stands here and in spite of all the changes in its surroundings remains a small oasis of peace. The journey to the church is so much easier nowadays as there are good roads. An extract from a passage written in an Ipswich paper in 1892 describes this journey very differently:- The extract written by Clarke (1830) said: *"By a short walk across the fields we avoid the town and arrive at the Parish of Whitton. The Church has been instituted as a Parochial Church upon the presentation of the Bishop of Ely ever since the year 1299 and probably long before."*

Those coming to the Church today may not realise the difficulties that had to be negotiated in bad weather. Another description written in 1892 says: *"The village stands about a mile to the west of Ipswich - not far indeed, but we should advise anyone who intends visiting this little village on a dark winters night - to go properly equipped. Very thick boots and gaiters will, be required for the Norwich Road, that important outlet from the County Town (along which more*

vehicles pass than on any other road in the neighbourhood) but which is in so bad a condition during the worst part of the winter that, for females, it is almost impassable".

Imagine those long skirts sweeping through the mud!

"If the traveller shalt have safely negotiated the ruts and mud as far as the railway arch, he will, at this point, need to light a lantern". Some changes are for the better!

The lane leading from Norwich Road to the Church was still apparent at the end of the 1940s. The remains of this lane passed between the back gardens of houses in Ashcroft Road and Everton Crescent and Preston Drive, petering out as the extensive house-building programme progressed. This lane would have retained the feeling of the countryside with dog roses and blackberries in its hedges and several species of wild flowers still surviving there. It was eventually taken over by housing and has disappeared.

There has been a Church at Whitton for many, many years. Domesday Book (1086) has Widetuna (Whitton) listed as having a church. However, no remains of a church earlier than the 13th century have been found so it can only be concluded that if there was a Norman church here, it was pulled down in the 13th century and replaced. The 13th century church was a small rectangular building probably constructed from the mid to late 13th century in the Early English style.

The church at Domesday's Turuestuna (one of many spellings) now Thurleston, was a larger church than the one at Whitton which was said to have only been a chapel in Norman times.

"In Turestuna in Claindune (Claydon) Hundred, Godric has a church, St. Botulf's with one acre. In this Hundred the king has thirty freemen with 147½ acres and a church in Widetuna with ten acres".

The parish of Thurleston was united with Whitton during the incumbency of Thomas Benson, who was instituted to

Whitton on 13th June 1514. Thereafter the church at Thurleston seems to have fallen into disrepair and was for several centuries used as a barn. Two drawings of this barn have survived in the Public Record Office. The site of this church was on the Thurleston Lane above and on the Ipswich side of the present Water Works building. Two cottages, known as Chapel Cottages, used to stand on the site which is at the top of Thurleston Lane above the waterworks where the road bends left, but today a modern house has been built on the site. The barn was finally pulled down in 1862 when materials were taken away to construct the new south aisle at Whitton.

The Victorian restoration copied the style of the Early English period. In 1850 the Chancel was remodelled and the Nave extended to incorporate the old internal bell and a large north aisle was built. The old Flemish bell was then rehung in a new external turret at the west end of the Nave above the spot where it had once hung internally. The cost was £800. The Ipswich Town Paper of October 19th 1850 describes the reopening. *"The parish church having undergone extensive alteration and being enlarged by the addition of an aisle on the north, will, we understand, be reopened for Divine Service on Friday afternoon. Besides the space obtained by the erection of an aisle, the lower part of a western tower has been removed and the nave extended in that direction. The western front will form a simple but not inelegant facade. Benches have been substituted for pews, but it appears to us that the rubric of the church, which enjoins a kneeling posture during prayer, has been overlooked. According to the phrase of the Church Building Society there will be a certain number of sittings, but of a more befitting and reverent posture there is no accommodation."*

The church was again enlarged in 1862 with the addition of a South Aisle and the present tower was added, crowned by a stone broach spire capped with a carved finial. This tower

also serves as the South Porch entrance. The doorway is of 13th century date and possibly was brought here from the ruined Thurleston medieval church of St. Botolph that was demolished at this time and plundered for materials for the reconstruction.

The Flemish bell was re-hung in the new tower. It is the earliest dated bell in the county and was cast in 1441. It bears the inscription 'Ave Maria gratis ano MCCCCXLI'.



Porch Entrance

The last major alteration to the building was the addition of a vestry in 1901.

There has been some confusion in the names of the two Churches over the years. In some records the church at Thurleston was named as St. Botolphs and the Church at Whitton as St. Mary, and in other records it has been the reverse, it is now believed that the former version was correct. In 1990 the issue was settled once and for all when the name was officially changed to incorporate both names and the church dedication became St. Mary and St. Botolph.

Church Interior

Unusually the main entrance is at the south-east corner, and part of the doorway is the only survival from the medieval church.

The South aisle and tower were added in 1862 using the drawings of the architect P.M. Phipson. Charles Steward, a prominent member of the congregation seems to have been a major benefactor of this work which used some of the old stonework and possibly the porch door arch from the ruins of the church at Thurleston which fell into disuse after the reformation.

It is clear that the new pillars, on the south side of the nave, were built inside the old church walls and were in place before the outer wall was taken down, again leaving the original roof in place. This strange procedure means that the nave is slightly out of line with the chancel and sanctuary because the new pillars take up space within the original nave building.

The interior roof of the building is remarkably low particularly in the nave and chancel which mark the extent of the original church.

South Aisle

This contains one of the Church's beautiful stained-glass windows by the firm of William Preedy of Worcester which represents Christ's Resurrection and Ascension with the Latin inscription 'ad finem es to fidelus'. Beneath the window is a brass plaque in memory of Charles Steward with the following inscription 'To the glory of God and in memory of Charles Steward, by whom this Church was mainly restored, who died on the 5th day of July 1867.'



South Aisle

The South Aisle became the Lady Chapel in a further restoration in 1980. The altar is an Elizabethan Holy Table. All churches had to provide these to replace the stone altars made illegal during the Reformation. Our example is a simple, plain structure and served for many years as a vestry table before being incorporated into the new chapel. Whether or not this table is the original one for this church is unknown. On this altar stands a small red wooden cross holding a carved Spanish Ivory Crucifix believed to be of the 17th century. This came from Akenham church where it had been damaged by vandals. It was brought to Whitton for safe keeping after being repaired. For many years it has been a

focus for prayer and devotion on the altar in the chapel. It happily symbolises the union between the two parishes and is taken back to Akenham whenever a service is held there.

Above the Lady Chapel Altar hangs an Italian 17th Century painting depicting 'The Virgin Mary and the infant Jesus with St. Elizabeth and St. John the Baptist, in the style of the Italian artist Luca Geordano. We know of the existence of two identical copies which may be contemporary. Mary wears a traditional blue robe reminding us of heaven (Mary Queen of Heaven); the red she wears is the traditional colour of Christ.

On the south wall is an Icon of 'The Transfiguration', which is the door of the Aumbry, a locked cupboard holding the reserved sacrament. This icon was painted by Fr. David of Skete Monastery of St. Seraphim, Dunton, near Fakenham.

The Nave

On the pillar to the right of the Chancel steps, next to the pulpit, is a small 19th century Eastern European icon of Jesus, below which is a votive candle stand.

To the left of the Chancel steps there is the Mother's Union

banner made in the style of an icon by Isabel Clover in the early nineteen seventies. The figures of Mary and Jesus are stylised The accentuated eyes emphasise that they look at the observer. The background is of gold and silver representing the heavenly realm from which Mary, 'Crowned as Queen' watches with her son. Perched on the ledge above the Banner is another image of Mary and Jesus. This is a plaster caste of a medieval statue. A traditional blue lamp burns beside this statue.



The Nave

On the pillar next to the banner is another 19th century Eastern European icon of Mary with Jesus. A votive candle stand invites worshippers to light a candle in remembrance of someone or to offer up their own personal prayers.

The pews are all 19th century. In the nave the pews have doors and are made of oak (as are the ones in the south aisle but without doors). These were the better seats which were subject to pew rents. They originally contained personal locked boxes in which were kept the prayer books and hymnbooks for the family renting each pew. Some of these boxes survived with their contents until they were removed during the refurbishment in 1980.

The space behind the back pew in the nave was the site of the internal bell tower.

The large West Window is also by John Hardman of Birmingham and depicts the Works of Mercy, feeding the hungry, clothing the poor etc. The inscription informs that these are the expected virtues of a Christian. Three angels adorn the window one of which, on the right, is regarded as especially well drawn. This Window was also erected to the memory of Mr. Charles Steward and the expenses were defrayed by sixty three of his friends.

North Aisle

Traditionally the cheaper pitch pine pews in the north aisle were the free sittings for the village poor.

On the wall at the back of the North Aisle is a Roll of Honour which records the inhabitants of Whitton Village who died in the Great War 1914-18.

At the front of the aisle adjacent to the font there is a stained glass window by the firm of William Morris. The window was given in memory of Mrs. Florence Dorothy



Morris Window



The Font and Organ

Horsfield who died on the 8th May, 1922. The brass plaque on the window sill was added in memory of her husband Col. George William Horsfield who died on the 25th January 1950. On the ledge below the window is a glass case holding a Remembrance Book.

In keeping with the tradition that Baptism is the first Sacrament the Font was originally at the back of the Church. It was moved during the 1980's to its present position in front of the choir and organ vestry. It is 19th century and has a circular arcaded bowl and an ornate wooden cover.

The Organ

Behind the font is a pipe organ which was installed in 2002 replacing a very basic Allen electronic instrument. It was generously given to Whitton by Melbourne (near Cambridge) Baptist Church.

It was installed in Melbourne, by Miller and Sons of Cambridge around the middle part of the 19th century and was a re-build of another instrument by an unknown builder.

The decorated and stencilled case, which was fully restored after installation at Whitton, would have been a very unusual feature in a non-conformist place of worship at that time. It is a very interesting small instrument making it ideal for its home at Whitton.

The Chancel

The Chancel Roof retains the original 13th Century roof-beams. These beams extend behind the wagon roof boarding in the nave as far as the back pew and mark the extent of the original church. There are two ancient



Chancel

wrought iron hooks in the Chancel eaves.

The wooden altar brought from St. Mary's church in Camberley, Surrey in the 1980's replaced a simple wooden structure.

The clergy reading desks were brought here from St Peter's Sudbury when that church became redundant. The desks have tracery fronts and incorporate mediaeval woodwork. Under the seats are misericords or little half seats for the priest to perch on during long services. A memorial plaque to Canon Jones is attached to one of the seats.

At the back of the choir stalls, on each side, there are carved faces of a man and woman. Experts consider one and probably both to be medieval and they may indeed be a relic from the two original church benches that once would have been placed on the wall on each side of the nave so that, before the days of pews, the 'weakest could go to the wall' and sit down.

In the south wall of the Chancel are two small stained glass windows: the first is inscribed Faith and is of striking colouring in a most unusual shade of green.

In the south wall of the Sanctuary is a simple thirteenth century piscina (a small sink for the cleansing of the holy vessels and the disposal of the water used in the Mass). The fact that this has survived shows that this part of the wall is original to the 13th century church. Its position in the wall indicates that it belongs to a time when the church floor was all at one level and since the floor of the Chancel and Sanctuary were raised the piscina is now at the wrong height.

The Willett family of Whitton Lodge gave the four small round windows in the south sanctuary wall to the church in the 1960's. They are quite clearly ecclesiastical and depict Jesus, Mary, St. Paul and St. John. They are early Victorian glass, probably 1840-55 but certainly not earlier than 1830. Their origin before they ended up in Whitton Lodge is a

mystery. Were they part of an early attempt at Restoration?

The great east window, depicting the Last Supper is by John Hardman who set up his firm in Birmingham in 1845 under the patronage of the famous architect Pugin. The window is recorded by a brass plaque beneath as in memory of Canon William Howarth who died in 1875. However, it is probable that the window was placed here before his death, as it is contemporary with the great west window, also by Hardman and in memory of Charles Steward.

The 'soldier window' in the south chancel wall, again by Hardman and in memory of Howarth's eldest son who was killed in 1865. Probably all three windows were commissioned at the same time to complete the restoration and enlargement of the church and which became memorials later.

On the east wall are two recesses, which have the Ten Commandments on grey slate. They were an ugly product of the Victorian Restoration and replaced earlier wooden panels containing the Lord's Prayer and the Creed. They have been covered up for most of their life by a curtain. In the redecoration in 1980 they were covered with gauze and painted over because, although they were considered to be of historic value, they were also considered an eyesore to be sympathetically hidden. The gauze and paint cover thus preserves them for history.



Soldier Window

To the left of the altar is a simple Tudor parish chest with three keyholes. In this chest would once have been placed the valuables of the parish, – service books and registers particularly. The three locks were an early form of double signed cheque security as three people had to be present to open the chest. Adjacent to the chest is the Bishop's throne. This has the distinction of being the original throne made for the Cathedral in Bury St. Edmunds in 1914 when this

diocese was created. It was removed to Whitton in the nineteen sixties when a new throne was constructed.

Additional Points of Interest

St Botolph

Botolph was born in the 7th Century and was educated at an Abbey in Northern France. In the year 654 he began to build a Monastery at Icanhoe. This could well have been at Iken on the river Alde which also has a church dedicated to St. Botolph.

St Botolph was well respected in his time. He was a good and pious man, but never proud or arrogant. He is recorded as having worked many miracles and also as having the gift of prophecy. During his time at his Monastery a snake bit him. He became very ill and when he recovered he was advised to travel. It was probably during this time that he preached in East Anglia as there are many churches dedicated to him in this part of England.

Botolph died at his own monastery at Icanhoe, after a long illness, on 17th June (probably about the year 680). His body was eventually divided into four parts which were buried in different holy places. This was considered a mark of veneration in those days.

Botolph is sometimes said to mean 'At the Gate' and sometimes 'Boat Help' which could have been the reason that St. Botolph was known as the Patron Saint of Travellers.

Records

The Register dates from the reign of Queen Elizabeth the First.

An interesting entry under the date 3rd October 1678, mentions a subscription made towards the building of St. Paul's Cathedral, the total being paid on 2nd May 1679 by A.M. Gilby. (Note Kelly's Directory says 'a Mr. Goldby').

Rectors of St. Mary and St. Botolph's Whitton

The list of Rectors dates from December 20th 1299. The first recorded Rector was Herbert de Cheperith, Acolyte - a minor order and not a priest. Another Acolyte, John de Weston, followed on June 8th 1325, but within a few months on February 3rd 1326 the first priest listed as Rector, John de Paxton, began office.

In the past Rectors were the people who received the tithing income of the Parish and were often laymen or only ordained to a minor order. Out of their income they had to provide for a priest to service the church. These unrecorded and poorly paid priests did the real work of the church in those early years.

There have been twelve incumbents since 1835 and the longest serving was Canon William Howarth. He was instituted as Rector on November 3rd 1835. He was to remain for forty years until he died on December 13th 1875 at the Rectory. Canon Howarth was born in 1806. He was the second son of the Revd. William Howarth (of the same name) who was Headmaster of Ipswich School. He held a curacy in March in Cambridgeshire where he met and married Caroline Orton, daughter of Thomas Orton, on Christmas Day 25th December 1831. He has left a lasting memorial to his long ministry not only in the brass memorial plaque beneath the east window but in the present appearance of Whitton church.

Harold Ansen	1875-1894
George Frederick Archer	1894-1918
Francis Edward Guy Longe	1918-1928
John Kemble Swinburne	1929-1939
Thomas George Moore	1939-1945
Hubert Newcombe Cox	1945-1954
Harold Sinclair Godwin	1954-1961
Donald John Smith	1962-1975
Claude Christopher Riches	1975-1978
Geoffrey Gordon Baulcomb	1979-2003

Their pictures are displayed in the Vestry

The present Incumbent is Revd. Andrew Dotchin 2004-

Bibliography

Clarke's History of Ipswich 1830

Canon Harold Ansoit

Ralph Linguard (Botolph)

Ipswich Town Paper 1850

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Revised by: Sheila Brooks and Pam Neesam 2008



The Church of St. Mary and St. Botolph Circa 1850

Built to the Glory of God for us to share in its worship, witness and self-sacrificing service.

Thanks be to God.

Before you go please pray for those who work and worship here and remember all those who have gone before, in faith over the past 700 years.

