



HARDHAM

Its History and its Church

As a Place name, Hardham is distinguished for having alternative forms of its name. In the Domesday Book it is *Heridehem*, and as such it represents the Old English *Heregytheam*, which means ‘home of a woman named Heregyth’. Later, from the time of king Stephen, it is *Eringeham* (to which in some documents an H is added, making it the “home of Here or Here’s people”). Documents give both names right down to the 18th century).

As a place, Hardham 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. It is estimated that the camp, above the junction of the rivers Rother and Arun, was established within ten years of the conquest of South-East Britain by Aulus Plautius in 43 A.D., and it probably remained in occupation for about 100 years, when the station was moved to a better site on Pulborough Ridge. When occupied by the military, the camp also appears to have been used for the manufacture of pottery, which may well have been a local industry before the Romans arrived. Here *Belgic* folk imitated plates and other vessels imported from the continent,

mostly grey wares, with some red and black. Some of the ware found its way to Bignor Villa, built during Agricola's governorship. 78-85 A.D.

The Church of St Botolph

The church is almost certainly Saxon. It has windows that are certainly not later than early Norman, and the fact that it is dedicated to a Saxon saint, and has the traditional British square east end leaves little doubt that it was built before the Conquest. Its founder and first *patron* may have been 'Godwine, a Free Tenant,' who held the manor in the time of Edward the Confessor, and its date is therefore about 1050 A.D. On the south side of the church there is an ancient bricked-up doorway.

The solidity of its structure, which has enabled it to stand against nearly a thousand years of exposure to the weather and some long periods of neglect, may be observed in the depth of the original lancet windows in the north and south walls of the nave and in the chancel. No doubt, the other windows, constructed in the late 16th century, were needed to provide more light. Into the building were introduced Roman bricks and tiles, recycled from the near by camp. On the south side of the chancel there is a *squint*, which, it is presumed, locates the site of the anchorite's cell, one certain occupant of which was Prior Richard in 1285 A.D.



The church is unique in its possession of the earliest nearly complete series of wall paintings in the country. They date from shortly after 1100 A.D. At some unknown date they were completely covered with plaster, and they have only been on view since 1866, when the first of them was rediscovered. In 1862 the plaster was chipped off the chancel arch to expose the stones beneath; with the plaster went a series of paintings of the *Occupation of the Months*, with the exception of one figure on the south side, a man apparently threshing corn with a flail.

The paintings are in two tiers, the upper in a much better state of preservation than the lower.

Those in the upper tier on the east, south and north walls of the nave are concerned with the nativity and infancy of our Lord. In sequence, beginning on the southern side of the chancel arch, they are as follows:

East wall: The Annunciation and The Salutation.

South wall: The Nativity; The Visit of the Shepherds; The Appearance of the Star; The Magi on their Journey; The Magi before Herod and the Chief Priests.

North wall: The Magi presenting their gifts; (top) Joseph warned in a Dream, (below) the Magi warned in a Dream: The Flight into Egypt; The Massacre of the Innocents.

East wall (North): Christ among the Doctors.

Over the chancel arch: A circular medallion depicting the Holy Lamb with worshipping angels on each side.

Of the scenes depicted in the lower tier, only those on the north wall are at all clear, and these deal with the legend of St. George, and help to date the whole of the paintings in the church. From the west end of the wall the subjects are: St. George intervening at the Battle

of Antioch, 1098 A.D.: The saint's Trial before Datian; the Attempt to break him on the Wheel.

The west wall provides a realistic series of four pictures of the Torments of Hell.

In the chancel the paintings are, for the most part, very indistinct, but the figures of *Elders* on the east wall indicate that the central subject was the *Worship in Heaven*. On the west wall of the chancel, the clearest and best outlined figures in the whole series are those of Adam and Eve, Eve receiving the forbidden fruit from the serpent, depicted as a wyvern. Below is the *Banishment from Eden*, and on the north side of the wall the outline of an animal with a figure below suggests as the subject *Eve milking a cow*.

The figures of six of the Apostles on the south wall of the chancel were uncovered in 1950.

A fuller description of the paintings is contained in a separate booklet.

The paintings have been treated with the best preservative known at the time the operation was performed. In the early stages sufficient care was not taken, and consequently a great deal of detail has been lost. Further conservation work was carried out in the 1980's & 1990's by Canterbury Cathedral Wallpainting Department and the Wallpainting Department of the Courtauld Institute of Art, particularly to the lower area beside the pulpit, the *Last Supper* on the north wall of the chancel and the *Nativity* scene on the south wall of the nave.

English Heritage are currently investigating means of stabilising the humidity in the church which is considered to be the most appropriate means of reducing further deterioration of the paintings.

There are two bells; on one is the inscription *Gloria Deo in Excelcicis T.P., 1636, B.E.*; the other has no mark or inscription, and is probably much earlier.

The Parish Registers, dating from the year 1642, are held in the county record office, whilst the Communion Plate, held in the Cathedral Treasury, dates from 1570 A.D.

THE PRIORY

The Priory of St. Cross, or of The Exaltation of the Holy Cross, was founded c.1250 during the reign of Henry III by Sir William Dawtrey, who held Hardham Manor and much other land in the neighbourhood. Of the original buildings, there remain the Chapter House, roofless but otherwise intact, and the Cellarage with Refectory over, now a dwelling house, reconstructed after a disastrous fire on May 12th, 1912.

As a priory of the black canons of St. Augustine, its occupants appear to have been few - in 1380 and 1521 only five. One Prior, Richard, was the anchorite for whom the *squint* was pierced in Hardham Church. In 1272 the prior had an action brought against him by Milane, the anchorite of Steyning, on the plea that she was owed 5,600 loaves of bread, 5,600 cooked messes, and 6,800 gallons of ale! In 1299, the prior, Robert Bedeketon, was deposed for misrule. Another prior, in 1542, was concerned in a poaching affray in Bignor Park. The Priory was not dissolved at the dissolution of smaller monasteries in 1536. There was some suggestion in 1532 of its suppression, but by "Cromwell's prudent counsel and charitable words," and the grant by the Canons of an annuity to Cromwell, it continued to stand till 1535, when it was dissolved by "agreement" between the Prior and Sir William Goring, the patron. The buildings were converted into a dwelling house and remained in possession of the Goring family until the 19th century.

SAINT BOTOLPH

Saint Botolph was born in East Anglia in 620. He and his brother Adolph were brought up as Christians and spent their early days amongst the bitter winds and black earth of the Fens. In the year 633 the heathen King Penda of Mercia made war on East Anglia devastating the countryside and persecuting Christians. Botolph and his brother were sent to a monastery in Bosham, in the province of the South Saxons, the ancient name for Sussex.

When they grew to manhood both felt they might have a vocation for the monastic life. To this end it was arranged that they should go to the Benedictine monastery at Farmoutiere-en-Brie in France. Here they came to a deeper knowledge of their Christian faith and, in time, became fully-fledged Benedictine monks. The progress that Botolph and his brother made in their spiritual life was to be the means of parting them. Adolph was made Bishop of Maestricht in France and Botolph went back to establish a monastery and further the Benedictine cause in his native land.

Attached to the monastery in Farmoutiere-en-Brie was a convent where the sisters of King Anna of East Anglia were at the time receiving instruction. They provided Botolph with letters of introduction to their brother and with these, and little else, he landed once more on the shores of his homeland.

King Anna was very helpful and when Botolph requested a plot of land on which to build his monastery, he at once offered him a prime plot on his own royal estate. But this was not what the saint wanted; he explained that the custom of the Benedictine order was to find a desolate spot and turn it into a thing of beauty. Anna gave him permission to take any site in his Kingdom that would suit him.

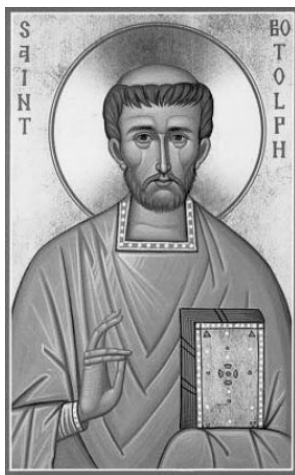
In time the saint came upon a suitably barren piece of land on a bleak headland in Suffolk called Ikenhoe. Here he first built a wooden hut where he and his followers sought to live a simple life of prayer. But Botolph was a caring person and his ministrations to

the poor, hungry and sick spread throughout the country. In time he became a well known and much loved figure, setting a shining example of the Christian ideal.

It was seven years before Botolph started to build his monastery and must have taken many more to complete it. When at last the building was finished the Saint set about instructing his monks in the Benedictine traditions, putting great stress on the fact that the order was not only interested in men's souls but also their bodies and minds.

We know very little about the many missionary journeys Botolph made, only that there were many. The fact that there are a group of churches dedicated to the Saint in West Sussex seems to indicate that he spent some time in the county. Heene, outside Worthing, St. Botolph's Church, in the village of that name near Steyning, and Hardham, all carry his name.

After life full of activity, Botolph was forced to retire to his monastery at Ikenhoe where a long illness eventually led to his death. He died on June 17th on his way to the chapel for the service of Compline. We have no record of the actual year of his death other than it was sometime between the years 680 to 700, which, by standards of that time would have made him a very old man.



Icon of St Botolph of unknown origin.

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