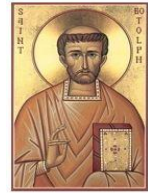




The Botolphian

Newsletter of
The Society of Saint Botolph

www.botolph.info



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1st March 2014.

Highlights this month

Please note that Dr Sam Newton's 'St Botolph Study Day' at Sutton Hoo is 28th June (not 21st June as written in last month's issue).

- St Botolph's Church, Grimston, Norfolk.
- Botolph and the two princesses.
- Correspondence from Patricia Croxton-Smith, Ann Levy, John Sennett, Simon Schanschieff, Emma Rose Barber and Robert Beavis.
- Thanks to Nigel Lacey and David Noy.
- Welcome to 4 new members.

Editorial

Welcome to the 12th issue of The Botolphian which has now completed its first year. At the outset I did say that, in order to give SOSB a good initial boost, I would start by publishing monthly newsletters (some sceptics doubted that I would manage it) and then, after a year, reduce to one issue every two months. The system seems to be working well however and everyone (including me) seems to be enjoying it, so, for the moment, we will continue with monthly copies.

This continuance is as a result of your encouragement, the latest of which comes from Ann Levy of Colchester who sent me her new email address so that, as she said, "I can carry on passing this splendid publication to some of our older members, who do so enjoy it. as do I." Thank you Ann for those few kind words which serve to make it all worthwhile.

Serendipity is a wonderful thing. I was at a meeting last week, sitting next to a charming lady who, it later transpired, was the daughter of Andrew Long, the former rector of St Botolph's Cambridge. I was impressed with her knowledge of 'all-things-Botolph' and I have pleasure in welcoming her and her husband as new members.

Church Feature

Grimston.

Approach:- *Either turn off the A148 and follow the B1153 to Grimston or, as we did, approach from the south. Once you are on the B1153 the church is easy to find.*

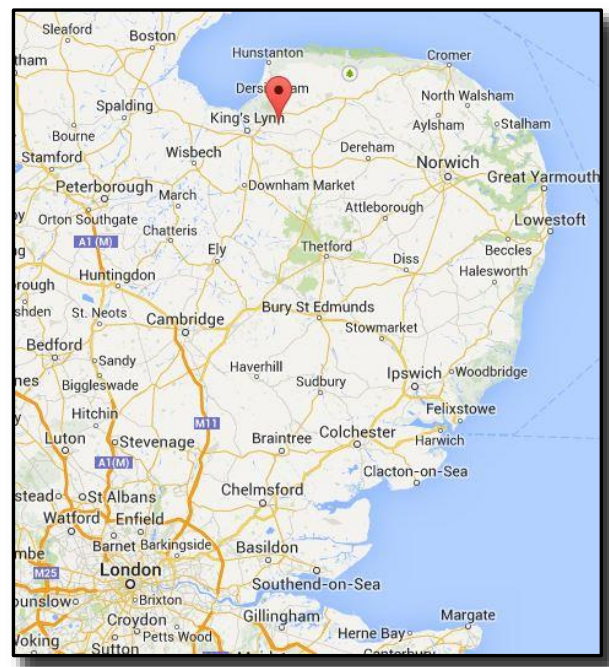
Key: *The church is open daily between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.*

Contacts: 1. *Jan Willson. Tel: 01485 601-666.*
2. *Revd Jane Holmes, The Rectory, Grimston Road, Gayton, King's Lynn PE32 1QA. Tel: 01553 636-227.*

Location: *52.7670, 0.5503, PE32 1BG.*

Listed Grade: I.

As noted in the last issue, it was Grimston's recently-retired rector, Revd William Howard, who prompted me to visit this lovely church.



Jan Willson kindly met us there on a bright January day but a biting wind encouraged me to

finish taking photographs from the churchyard and to get inside the church as quickly as possible.

I shall remember Saint Botolph's Grimston as being the 'church-of-woodcarvings' and how magnificent they are.



Since my visit, the Reverend Jane Holmes has taken over as Priest-in-charge of the Grimston, Congham, Roydon group of churches. She has added these to the Gayton Benefice that she was already looking after.

As I remarked when talking to her on the telephone after my visit - the carvings are so magnificent that it is difficult to know which ones to leave out. Those that I include here are the winners in that competition; there are still plenty more which I have not featured.

History of the existing church:

The church as we see it today dates from C13 although it was heavily restored in C19. As we have seen so many times before, this Botolph's church joins those having a secret predecessor the evidence for which can be seen from the presence of Saxon quoins (arrowed below) at the junction of the tower and the north aisle.

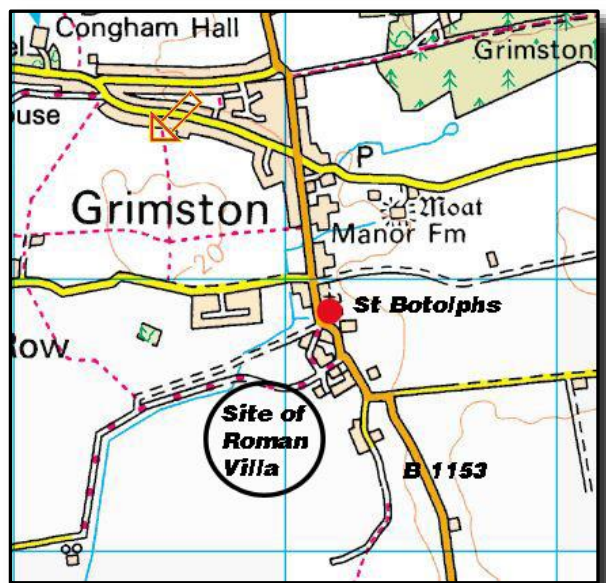


Grimston was a Saxon village and a rich source of iron and salt. Freshwater springs are plentiful in the area and 450 yards SW of the church lie the foundations of a Roman villa, bricks from which can be found in the wall and buttress of the North aisle. Three miles to the south near Gayton Thorpe lie a tumulus and the foundations of yet another Roman villa. These all point to the fact

that this has been an important site since well before the Roman Conquest.



Grimston and its three neighbouring Botolph Churches are dotted around the nearest ancient trackways (shown below in red). In Grimston's case the nearest is *Peddars Way* which starts from the end of the *Icknield Way* at Thetford and then runs NNW up to the coast.



The church's fabric is of *carrstone* which is a sandstone found extensively in Norfolk and (less so) in Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire; it varies in colour according to the amount of iron oxide it contains. Nearby Ashwicken, is one of only four smelting areas in East Anglia where the Romans extracted iron from this local stone. Just a little further north in Snettisham the carrstone quarry is still working today.

The darkness of the material would have lent the original Saxon church rather a gloomy interior. This may have been the reason for extending the building in c.1220 by the addition of the South aisle with its delicately moulded pillars of white stone brought up from Barnack near Peterborough. A few decades later, the North aisle was added.

Two centuries passed before the Lord of the Manor, Sir Benedict de Beccles, rebuilt the eastern end, extending the nave by one bay and erecting a new chancel and transepts.

The final glory was to add the C15 clerestory (the 'clear story' level giving extra height to the nave and bringing light into the church) and the elegant two stage flint-faced 97 ft tower.

The Domesday Book (1086).

Although, in common with many others of our featured churches, Grimston church was not mentioned in the Domesday Survey, it has been suggested that this was because it did not have a glebe (i.e. attached land for the purpose of supporting the priest). There seems to be no doubt however that the church was already in existence.

The wood carvings:

These include a man with a pig on his back, a dog which has caught a goose, a moustachioed man, a mermaid, a poor man and various birds and animals:-



Items of interest:

1. The C15 South porch with an outside high niche in which a statue of Botolph would have stood, and the inner doorway with its fine dog tooth moulding and three orders of shafts.
2. The C13 font supported by five pillars.
3. The elegant C15 tower arch and the signs (arrowed below) of an earlier lower arch at the responds of both North and South aisles.
4. The C15 pews tucked away in the NW corner complete with their wonderful carvings.
5. The fine C13 quatrefoil columns of the South aisle, the capitals of which differ slightly from those of the North aisle dating the former to c.1240 and the latter to c.1280.
6. The C13 consecration cross on the South wall.
7. The piscina in the South transept.



8. The painted C15 panels on the bottom half of the rood screen. The paintings are reminiscent of Italian silk fabrics of the day.

9. The misericords with their attractive carvings of varying dates (the carving of the man with the moustache is Victorian but, with one other exception, the others are much earlier).

10. In the chancel the C14 ogee (double S-shaped) arches around the sedilia and piscina.



11. The C15 Perpendicular style windows of both North and South aisles. These are later insertions into the C13 walls.

12. Outside the North door is a stoup which was filled with consecrated water so that members of

the congregation could sign themselves with a cross before entering the church.

13. The transept windows - which are of different designs and vie for the accolade of greatest beauty.

Relevance of the church to Botolph's life:

The church is definitely in the saint's geographical working area and, bearing in mind the site's ancient provenance it seems likely that, if not Botolph personally, then at least his acolytes would probably have visited the region and even perhaps set up the first field chapel there.

This would put the church into category A, i.e. a church which was probably founded as the result of an Icanho mission, rather than being set up at a later date to serve Saint Botolph's function as Patron Saint of Travellers.

Focus on Saint Botolph.

Two British princesses in a Frankish monastery:-

Monasteries were not just for monks. There were many early mixed monasteries, the first in Britain being founded in c.635 in Lyminge, Kent by Ethelburga - widow of King Edwin of Northumbria and sister of King Eadbald of Kent.

The new fashion had been influenced by the success of such monasteries in France and one of the most important of these was the abbey of Evriacum which was founded c.620 by its redoubtable abbess Fara and renamed Faremoutiers in her honour after she died.

The abbey was thirty miles east of Paris and accommodated several hundred monks and nuns together with slaves and other personnel necessary to run such a large institution. Because of its size and reputation many younger members of British royal families were attracted to this 'finishing school'. Two of these were princesses from East Anglia, - Ethelburg (no relation to the Ethelburga mentioned above) and her older step-sister Saethryth. Their father was King Anna. Both sisters remained in France for the rest of their lives, Saethryth succeeding Fara as abbess and Ethelburg succeeding Saethryth.

It is generally believed that it was these two sisters who met Botolph at Faremoutiers c.646 and petitioned their king to grant him the land upon which, in 654, he built his famous monastery of Icanho.

Readers' Letters and Emails

1. As a result of my suggestion that Eastwick church was 'Category C' - i.e. neither a 'Travellers' Church' nor a church founded as the direct result of an Icanho mission, **Patricia Croxton-Smith** wrote to disagree. She feels that, in spite of the nearest Roman road being two miles away, Eastwick is more likely to be a Category B 'Travellers' Church' on account of its close proximity to the River Stort. She says, *"Remember rivers were main highways where possible. Water transport was much quicker than walking or riding."* Patricia may well be correct about the classification, - it is interesting to note that all the churches featured in the second map above are, like Eastwick, 2-3 miles away from the main roads.

2. **John Sennett** wrote: "Thanks for visiting Swyncombe, meeting Len Ashby and for such a full Newsletter!! Come again during our Snowdrops weekends in February (see website <http://www.st-botolphs-swyncombe.info/>).

Thank you John, I am sorry that I failed to mention Swyncombe's reputation for lovely February/March walks through massive crops of snowdrops. They seem to be lasting well this year so ... Botolphians, - if you are able to - go to Swyncombe and give yourselves a treat.

3. **Simon Schanschieff** wrote suggesting that I might like to review the profile of Revd Richard Coles who was curate at St Botolphs, Boston but has now become a celebrity in his own right. On so doing I discovered that Richard is a talented musician and was a member of *The Communards* band in the 1980s. He now appears frequently in the media and in 2011 became the regular host of BBC Radio 4's *Saturday Live* programme.

4. **Emma Rose Barber** sent me a facsimile of a manuscript which showed the attributes of Saint Botolph as being a crozier and a shoe. She queried the crozier in view of his non-status as a bishop. After a little digging I managed to find a copy of one of the oldest icons of our saint which is an altar painting held by the Bergen University Museum. This shows Saint Botolph holding something which looks like a crozier but is in fact an Abbatial Staff.

5. **Robert Beavis** kindly sent me his article 'Barber's Point, which is about an archaeological dig near Iken on the River Alde. I was intending to publish some of this in this month's issue but I ran out of space so I hope Robert will forgive me.

I shall include it in the next issue but in the meantime will reproduce the full article on the www.botolph.info website. Thank you Robert.

Thanks

1. Many thanks to **Revd Nigel Lacey** who was kind enough, at very short notice, to show me the delights of St Botolph's Church, Bradenham, Buckinghamshire.

2. Many thanks also to **David Noy** for introducing me to the two very interesting but non-Botolph churches of Wing and Stewkley in Buckinghamshire. Also for furthering my education by teaching me how to interpret and transcribe C17 lists of 'Goods and Chattels'.

Membership of SOSB

I am delighted to welcome the following new members:-

Reverend Jane Holmes (new Priest-in-charge Grimston, Norfolk)
Don Fagg (Folkestone, Kent)
Margaret Carnegie (Sandwich, Kent)
Alistair Carnegie (Sandwich, Kent)

Regular Endnotes

If this is your first 'Botolphian' and you have acquired it by circuitous means but would like to receive an email copy each month then just send an email to botolph@virginmedia.com saying 'YES PLEASE.' If you wish to UNsubscribe then send the message 'NO THANKS.'

You will frequently see the 'twin' towns of **Boston** mentioned in these newsletters, - one in Lincolnshire and the other in Massachusetts USA. The relevance to the Society is that the name 'Boston' is a contraction of '**Botolph's Town**.'

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Folkestone, Kent. 1st May 2013.