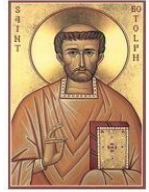




The Botolphian

Newsletter of
The Society of Saint Botolph

www.botolph.info



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President: Revd Timothy L'Estrange, Vicar of St.Gabriel's Church, North Acton.

Issue Number: 29

1st September 2015

Highlights this month

- St Botolph's Church, Shepshed, Leics.
- Welcome to new members: Revd Linda Shipp (St Botolph's Carlton-in-Cleveland); Richard Daniels (Folkestone); Lynn Graham; Ray Broom (Church with Chapel Brampton); Revd Celia Cook (newly-appointed vicar at Culpho); Nigel North and his mother Joan (Folkestone); Helen and Richard Monk (Folkestone - Many years ago they were married at St Botolph's church Chevening, Kent). *Our numbers are still gradually rising and we now have 272 email addresses on our list and this represents over 420 members.*
- Welcome to a NEWLY-DISCOVERED BOTOLPH CHURCH - (it is not often we have one of these) - but I have found evidence of a St Botolph's chapel AND another Botolph's Bridge - both at Bury St Edmunds.
- SOSB ANNUAL LUNCHEON ON **TUESDAY 13th OCTOBER 2015 AT THE CAMBRIDGE CITY HOTEL AT 12.30 for 1 p.m. at £25 per head which includes two courses and tea or coffee. PLEASE JOIN US IF YOU CAN - PLACES ARE STILL AVAILABLE.**
- A separate email will be sent to the 'Annual Luncheoners' shortly.
- I can now announce that the speaker at our luncheon will be Derek Cummings who will be talking on the 'Mystery of the Sanctuary Seeker'.
- Following the luncheon, Derek has kindly organised the services of a Blue Badge Guide (Sue Payne) who will be taking us on a brief tour of St Botolph's and St Bene't's churches..

Editorial

Zina and I spent a very pleasant few days in Yorkshire in August. Our base was Monk Fryston, just south of York and we visited the three most northerly of the Saint Botolph Churches, - namely Horsehouse, Frosterley and Carlton-in-Cleveland.

Frosterley is in the county of Durham and all that remains of its former 'Saint Botolph's Chapel' is now called 'Saint Botolph's Mound' (seen behind the car park in the picture below). The chapel fell into ruins many years ago and the foundations have since been covered over and are scheduled as an ancient monument.



To the left of the picture is a chunk of Frosterley marble and there are some marble tiles set amongst the paving slabs one of which is shown below. This much-sought-after decorative building material has been quarried in the region since C13. When cut and polished the grey limestone becomes shiny black and highlights the white skeletons of sea creatures which have become fossilised within its matrix.



I have visited a Botolph Church where the font bowl was made of such a marble (at that stage I did not realise it was from Frosteley) but ... of course ... I now cannot remember where it was. Perhaps a reader might be good enough to remind me.

Church Feature

Shepshed (Leicestershire)

Approach: From Leicester, take the M1 north turning off at Junction 23 taking the A512 signposted Loughborough/Shepshed then at the roundabout take the first exit into Ashby Road East. After half a mile turn right into Leicester Road. Go through one roundabout and then, 0.7 miles after leaving Ashby Road, at the next roundabout take the second exit on to Forest Street which, after 0.2 miles, bends round to the left becoming Loughborough Road. Take the first left into Church Gate. After passing the Parish Hall on your left you will see the church in front of you. Turn right into the car park.



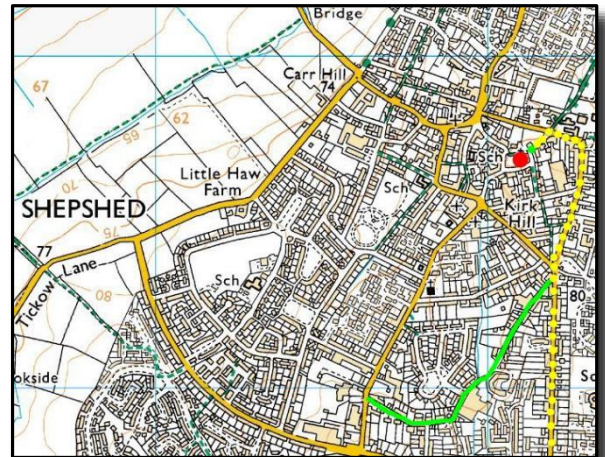
Key: The church is usually locked so, before your visit, be sure to telephone the Parish Office on **01509 502-255** to arrange a suitable time to view. The church is open on Tuesday and Saturday mornings from 9.30 to 12.30 for 'fellowship, prayer and a cuppa' (But I am not sure how far into the winter that goes so it is still better to telephone first).

Vicar: Revd Cynthia Hebden.

Church services: Sundays at 9.30 a.m.

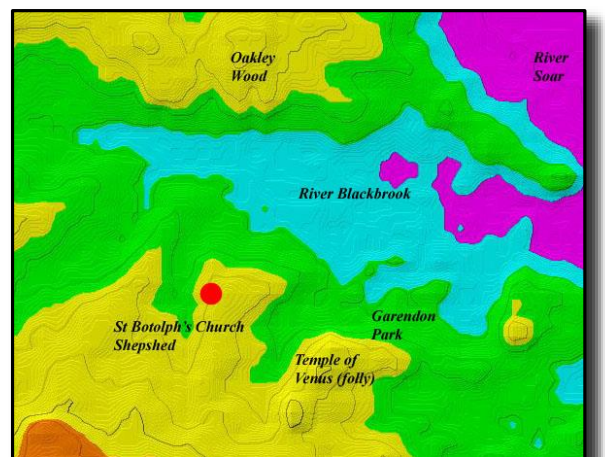
Location: Church Side, Shepshed, Leicestershire LE12 9RH. 52.7727, -1.2884. NGR SK4810419693. Tel: 01509 502255.

Listed Grade: I.



Marked in yellow on the map above is the route to Shepshed church and marked in green are two roads, namely Sullington Road and Ring fence, which locals claim to be two of the oldest roads in the country.

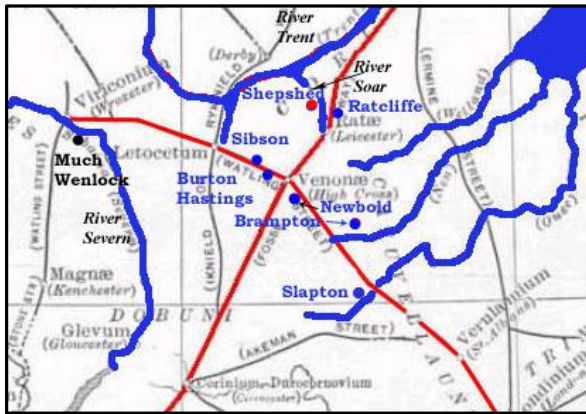
Like many Botolph churches, Shepshed lies on a hill overlooking a valley - although this is not so evident until one looks at a map (like that below) where the roads are eliminated and the contour lines stand out.



Black Brook is now no more than a stream feeding into the River Soar (earlier name *Ligora*). The Soar links Leicester (toponymy: *Ligora-ceaster* - fortress on the Ligora) to the River Trent and thence to the North Sea.

The River Ligora featured in Geoffrey of Monmouth's writings of 1136 when he told of *King Leir* being buried by his daughter Cordelia beneath the river in a chamber dedicated to Janus - the Roman god of beginnings, transitions and endings. Shakespeare's *King Lear* was based on Monmouth's tale.

Shepshed is recorded in the 1086 Domesday Book bearing the Anglo-Saxon name of *Scepeshefde Regis* (The hill of the king where the sheep graze). Today Shepshed's population is about 14,000 and until recently it made two important claims: firstly that it was the largest village in Britain and secondly that it had the highest number of public houses per head of population.



The church.

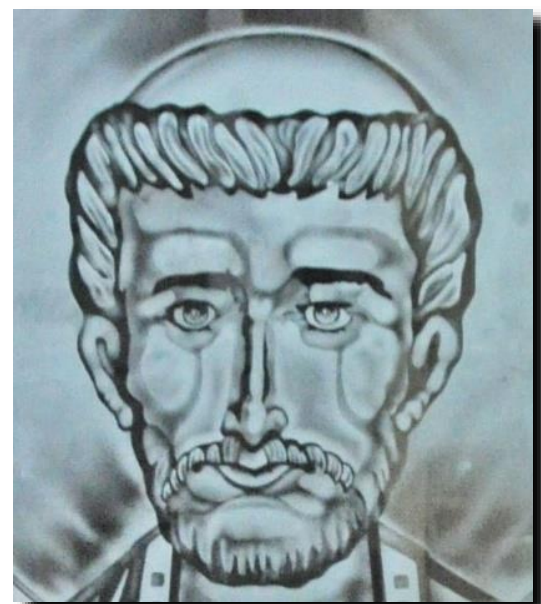
The oldest part visible today is the C12 west tower. The main fabric of the church is C15. The south transept and vestry were added in 1935. Ambitious restoration work took place in 2008.

The very first item you might admire as you enter the church through the north porch doorway is the beautiful Saint Botolph icon engraved on the glass of the inner door. This is appropriate for the Patron Saint of Travellers - you meet him both on the way in and on the way out!

I do not know if there are other icons of saints inscribed on glass doors, but it must be very unusual and I believe that this is the only one of Saint Botolph. I guess that this beautiful work was accomplished in 2008 when the church had its last refurbishment; I would love to know the name of the artist.



Not only is the presentation unusual but the artwork seems to be unique and not a copy of another artist's work. I have catalogued it as Saint Botolph Icon Number 10. Here is a detail of the face:



Saint Botolph really looks quite human here and the sort of fellow you could comfortably have a chat with. Is there a Mona Lisa-type hint of a smile on his face?

If you can drag yourself away from this, the next two items that you should look at are the two which I initially missed. High above you at the top of a pillar is the carved figure of a pre-Christian fertility symbol known as *sheela-na-gig*. This was originally on the outside of the church wall before the north aisle was added.



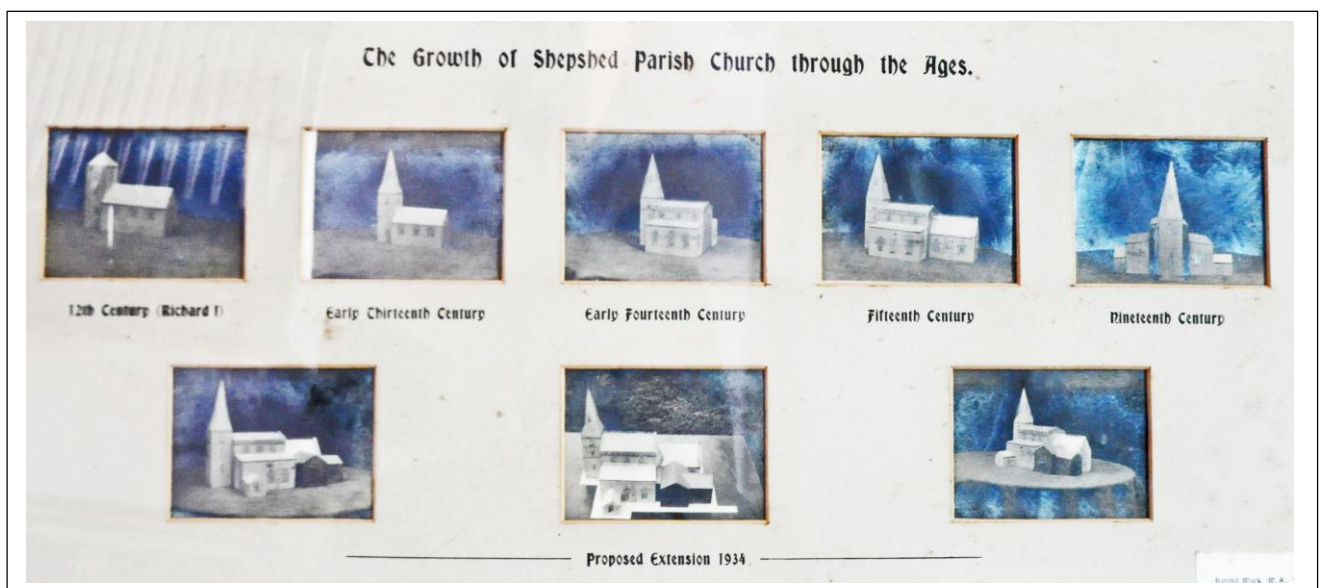
If you turn to your left at the 'Botolph doorway' you will see some 500 year old poppyhead pews. Scratched on the seat at the right hand end of one of them is a board of the game of *Nine Men's Morris*. You might remember that a board was also found scratched on a tomb in Saint Botolph's Church Newbold-on-Avon (featured last month). This game is not peculiar to sufferers of long sermons in Botolph Churches since the board is also to be found carved into cloister seats at Canterbury, Gloucester, Norwich and Salisbury cathedrals as well as Westminster Abbey. The earliest known board dates from 1400BC; it was found in Egypt. The game has been popular in Britain since the Roman Conquest - and I see it still has its followers since the travel version can be purchased for £4.95 on the internet!

The 'spanning' picture below nicely illustrates the development of the church since C12 but the consensus of opinion is that a place of worship was present on the site long before this. The simple single-celled (with tower) building was expanded both sideways (providing north and south aisles) and upwards (providing a clerestory to add more light) in C14 - and in C15 the chancel was added.

The result is a wonderful light, airy and comfortable church with a most welcoming atmosphere. The building is not only a place of worship but a major centre for the Shepshed community as we saw on our visit. Revd Ed' Brampton, the curate, was busy in the nave, laying out the tables for the church's next social function.



The 'comfortable' atmosphere is magnified by the presence of so many memorials and carvings. Like Newbold-on-Avon, Shepshed St Botolph's metamorphosed into a 'Gentleman's Church' several hundred years ago. The only brass in the church is now vertical (I assume it was originally horizontal) and is to be found on the north wall of the chancel.



It commemorates the life of the church's C16 patron Thomas Duport (1513-92), his wife Cornelia and their seven children. Duport must have taken an interest in the church and refashioned it as a symbol of his own success. Future patrons, notably the squires of Garendon Estate, followed suit from C17 to C19.



Duport's ancestors were of Norman origin. Thomas acted as legal agent for the Marquess of Dorset until the Marquess was executed for treason in 1554. Duport then became MP for Truro and subsequently developed a highly-successful law practice in Leicestershire, the profits from which he invested in land in the Shepshed area where he was eventually buried.

The nearby Garendon Abbey (see the contour map shown earlier) was a Cistercian foundation endowed in 1133 by Robert de Beaumont, 2nd Earl of Leicester. By the end of C13 however, the abbey was insolvent but it staggered on until the Dissolution when it was demolished.

The land became the seat of the Earls of Rutland until 1632 when it was given as part of a dowry for the marriage of Lady Katherine Manners to the Duke of Buckingham. 52 years later it was sold to Sir Ambrose Phillips - who was, by coincidence, another lawyer. The Phillips family then became Lords of the Manor and patrons of the church until 1856. In the 1720s several Palladian follies were built on Garendon Park, one of which, the Temple of Venus, can still be seen from the Loughborough Road. Below are examples of just a few of the magnificent family memorials that are in the church.



In different circumstances these enormous structures might appear garish and overbearing but Shepshed Saint Botolph's is a large church which is tastefully decorated and, somehow, it manages to handle the situation successfully.



Shepshed sports *two* fonts, one of which is Victorian and has been in regular use for many years ...



... the other, apparently a much older structure, was rescued from the churchyard fifty years ago and now stands at the end of the north aisle.



The church contains two Parish Chests but I failed to get around to peering inside them.



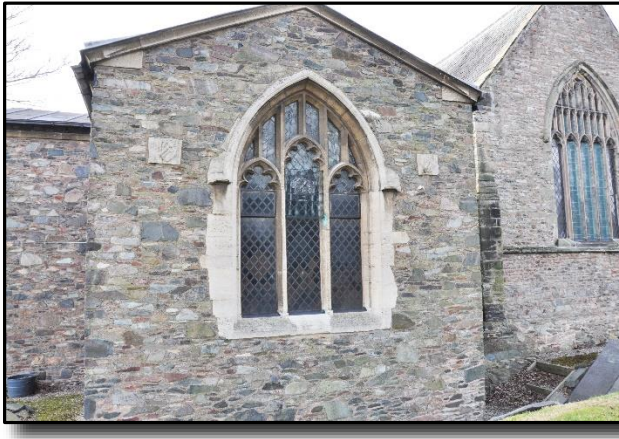
Regarding the outside of the building - the west tower is clearly of older fabric ...



... and this picture shows evidence of where the nave joined the tower before the north isle was added.



On the east wall of the C20 vestry there are two plaques of indeterminate provenance



Classification of the site.

The church leaflet tells us that 'there was probably a wooden church before the Norman Conquest on this, the highest point in Shepshed' - and I see no reason to disagree with this. The question remains whether the original church was built during C7 or during the Danelaw period. The fact that Shepshed is so far to the west makes me think that the latter would have been the case and I would therefore suggest it should be classified as B(ii) - the site of a 'Travellers' church founded between 800 and 1066.

My thanks

to Revd Ed. Brampton for welcoming us into the church.

The Botolph Patterns

If you look at (almost) anything and study it for long enough then a pattern starts to appear. I am sure that Darwin, Galileo, Newton and Einstein found this. In a much more humble vein I have been studying Botolph Churches for quite a long time now and a pattern is starting to form.

The first thing that strikes one is that, *if a church is dedicated to Saint Botolph, it is likely to have a long pedigree*. So with that clue in mind the researcher would do well to *look for* that extended pedigree.

The second thing that becomes apparent is that many Saint Botolph Church sites have the potential for at least four stages of building work. Let us consider them archaeologically as if we were digging down through the foundations of an existing church. In reverse chronological order then we might find:

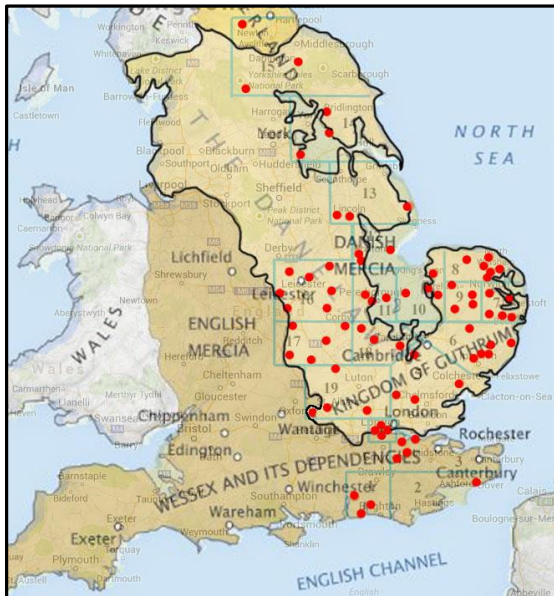
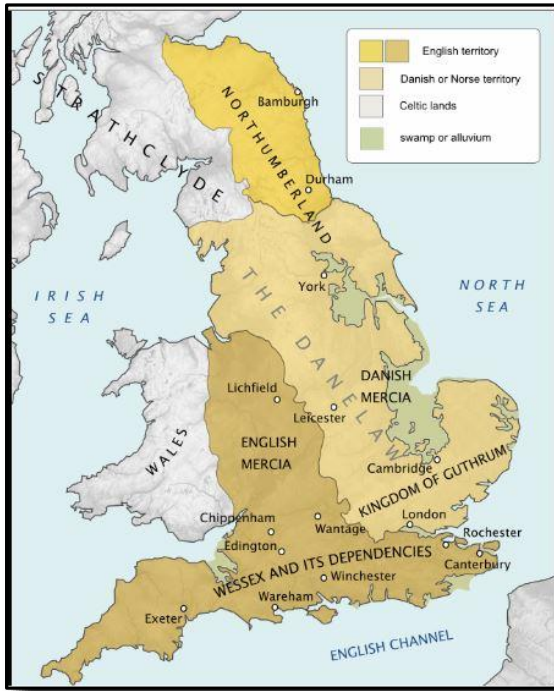
1. A 'Gentleman's' church
2. A Norman church
3. A Danelaw church
4. A Saxon field chapel

As we saw last month at Newbold-on-Avon, the Ward-Boughton-Leigh family had done much in the way of providing, restoring and maintaining their church. This runs parallel to the situation in East Anglia and the Cotswolds where the availability of surplus funds gave rise to the 'Wool Churches'. Prosperous trade led to the building of grand edifices which were a sign of the community's increased standing. This type of impetus lasted typically from mid C15 to mid C16 (i.e. the Tudor period) when there were great opportunities for class change. The run-of-the-mill merchant could suddenly become very rich and when he did so he wanted everybody to know about it so he used his new-found money to build a church and install a family tomb and thus proclaim his right to being regarded as a Gentleman. Coats of arms suddenly became highly embellished to proclaim real or imagined ancestry. This provided the *nouveaux riches* with the prestige they desired whilst simultaneously bringing great benefits to the local community.

When the Normans took control in 1066 they soon started to do all they could to bring about changes that were more in tune with the French way of life. To that end there were many alterations both in ecclesiastical administration and in building. Not only did Duke William and his cronies want the churches to conform to the French liturgical fashion but they saw the buildings as utilitarian structures which could be made to look sturdier and more imposing as a sign of the Conqueror's strength.

These military requirements together with the long-term French ethos of Christianity spurred the new masters into putting the English to work to restore and modify the churches; a shrewd move since it gave work to 'idle hands', created community foci and provided a series of small fortifications. The earlier churches were either torn down or else remodelled.

Many of these earlier churches (particularly those dedicated to Saint Botolph) had been built in C9 and C10 under the influence of Danelaw. When one takes a map showing the Danelaw provinces of 878 and lays it over a map showing the known sites of Botolph Churches it is startling to find how closely our churches follow the boundaries.



Christianity did not come to Denmark until late in C9 and one would like to think that this was because they learned a thing or two while they were in English company...
To be continued.

Readers' letters and emails.

1. **Father Pachomius** wrote to remind me that many (or all?) Greek Orthodox churches use the Julian Calendar for their liturgical life.
2. **Anne Pegg** wrote to tell me of the 'Church and Settlement: Rural Churches and the Medieval Landscape' conference at the University of Leicester 4-6th September. Sadly I shall be unable to attend but any latecomers who are interested should contact

<http://archaeologyuk.org/socchurcharchaeol/conferences.html>. although it is getting rather late now.

3. **Kathleen Tyson Quah** has been making good progress with her investigation into her newly-proposed alternative site for Botolph's Icanho. I hope that she will find time to write a paper to include in a future *Botolphian*.

4. **Guy Hartfall** wrote with the good news that Culpho (Suffolk) Saint Botolph's have a new vicar. Her name is Revd Celia Cook and we are pleased to welcome her as a new member.

5. **Revd Kathy Couchman** wrote welcoming us to St Botolph's Horsehouse, Yorkshire.

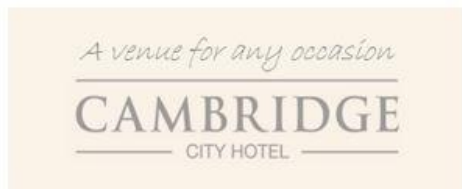
6. **Revd Linda Shipp** wrote welcoming us to St Botolph's Carlton-in-Cleveland. [It was a delight to meet Linda during our visit and to be presented with a bottle of St Botolph's Beer from Massachusetts!]



Endnotes

Please do not hesitate to write to me or send an email to botolph@virginmedia.com if you have any alternative views to those expressed in *The Botolphian*. It is good to engender some controversy from time to time!

**If you find this pinned up
in the porch of your church
(we encourage all our churches
to do this)
and you would like to receive your
own copy regularly,
please email me at
botolph@virginmedia.com
and ask to be added to our list.**



The Fitzwilliam

Please choose one item for each course

Starters

Cream of roasted vine tomato and basil soup (v)
Sliced buffalo mozzarella, plum tomato and pesto salad (v)
Chicken liver parfait with plum chutney, toasted brioche

Main Courses

Roasted corn fed chicken stuffed with cream cheese, wrapped in Parma ham
Salmon fillet with olive tapenade, new potatoes, roasted vine cherry tomatoes
Wild mushroom risotto, asparagus, truffle oil and parmesan shavings (v)

Desserts

New York cheesecake with berry compote
Warm apple crumble fresh cream
Exotic fruit salad

*I shall be sending a separate email to all 'Annual Luncheoners' shortly.
Please note that in the above menu your £25 only covers you for two
courses - either Starter and Main - or Main and Dessert.*

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 said to be a contraction of '**Botolph's Town**.'

Classification of Botolph Church sites:-

A: C7 church sites relevant to Botolph's life.

B: 'Travellers' churches.

Bearing in mind that the Danish invasions started in c.800 and continued for 200 years, it seems logical to sub-divide Type B (and perhaps type C) churches into those which appear to have been founded:-

- (i) before 800
- (ii) between 800 and 1066 and
- (iii) after the Norman Conquest.

C: Neither of the above.

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Folkestone, Kent. 1st May 2013.