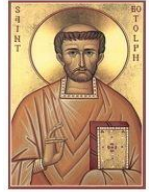




# The Botolphian

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: 31

1st November 2015

## Highlights this month

- St Botolph's church Sibson, Leicestershire.
- Welcome to new members: Steve Williamson (Grimston); Arthur Davies (Colchester); Diane LeMare and Paul Wadey (Heene); Margaret Gornall (Culpho); Colin Potter and Justin Scale (Pembrokeshire); Chris Francis (Folkestone). Email addresses now stand at 278 and (re-audited) membership at 353.
- Emails from. Guy Hartfall re Queen's foundation & reply from Joanna Comer. Information from Diane LeMare about the rescue of Heene church. Correspondence with Graham Jones, Colin Potter and Justin Scale about an obscure St Botolph's Chapel in Pembrokeshire.

## Editorial

The Third Annual Luncheon of the society was held on Tuesday 13 October 2015 and, for the second year running, the venue was Cambridge City Hotel. Our first luncheon, in 2013, was at the University Arms hotel and there was some hope that we might return one day but these hopes were dashed this year when we found it had been razed to the ground.

The Cambridge looked after us very well however; the room we used had been refurbished and was very suitable.

Time rather overtook us during the meal which lasted for 80 minutes instead of my anticipated 60 (I must remember this next year) and so I had to severely cut down my welcome to guests.

24 people attended which (on the latest calculations) is about 7% of our membership. This number was ideal from the point of view of our all being able to enjoy each others' company and being able to hear the 'cabaret' clearly. I hope for more attendees next year however; this event is in its infancy and I had many apologies from people who had attended previously and would have come had they had been able to - so I am confident that next year (tentatively booked for **THURSDAY 13 OCTOBER 2016**) there will be a vast leap in numbers.

Sadly one of those who could not attend was our president Revd Timothy L'Estrange (see 'Letters' at the end of this issue).



The aforementioned cabaret was a huge success. In the picture below Derek Cummings plays the Coroner quizzing David Buxton (as the Sanctuary-seeker) while the jury: Sylvia Robertson, Ray Broom, Marion Peel and Janet Buxton look on. The scenario was a most instructive and amusing after-luncheon cabaret based on a true story and entitled "The Mystery of the Sanctuary Seeker."



The following picture shows us in St Botolph's Lane, Cambridge led by our tour guide Sue Payne...



... and here we are in the gardens of St Botolph's church where we were welcomed by Revd Margaret Widdess who is now priest-in-charge following the recent retirement of Revd Professor William Horbury to whom our best wishes are sent.



We had a wonderful day. Many thanks to all of you for attending and particularly to Derek Cummings for organising so many things and to Sue Payne for giving of her time so generously.

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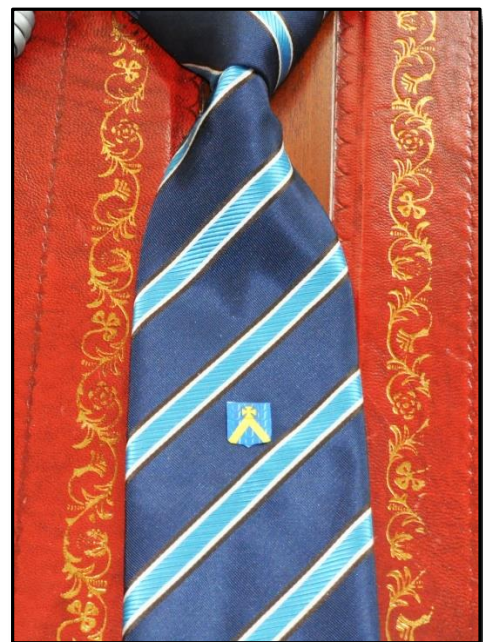
At the luncheon, the possibility of producing an SOSB tie was mentioned. I have made some enquiries and the picture below is a mock-up of

the proposed design. It is a very attractive tie which can be worn on any occasion. The Saint Botolph shield is central but there is no wording as it is hoped that curiosity will compel admirers to ask what the shield represents.

Sales of the tie would not be restricted to SOSB members so it is hoped that the merchandise would advertise our saint and result in increased membership.

*The price would be £14 each (plus £3 p&p) but keeping them at this low price means that we have to sell 27 before breaking even.*

All profits will go towards SOSB funds (of which we have none at present!). I intend that these funds be used to provide such things as speakers/guides etc at our Annual Luncheons.



I do NOT require money at the moment since I will be unable to put the ties into production until I have 27 firm orders.

**CHRISTMAS IS COMING however and the tie would make an ideal present.**

In order to make this feasible therefore, please contact me by **14 November 2015** at [botolph@virginmedia.com](mailto:botolph@virginmedia.com) or on 01303 221-777 or 07802 646-0644 to show your interest.

### Church Feature

**S**ibson (Leicestershire).

**Approach:** From heading northwest on Watling Street, turn right at Caldecote onto the A444 towards Burton passing Bosworth Battlefield Centre on your right. At the Cock Inn take a left



turn towards Sheepy Parva and Sheepy Magna and a few yards later after a right hand bend you will find the church on your right. Roadside parking should be easy.

**Key:** Contact Roger or Joan Moreton Tel: 01827 880-586. Alternatively John Hobson Tel: 01827 880-967.

**Vicar:** Revd Julia Hargreaves Tel: 01827 881-389.

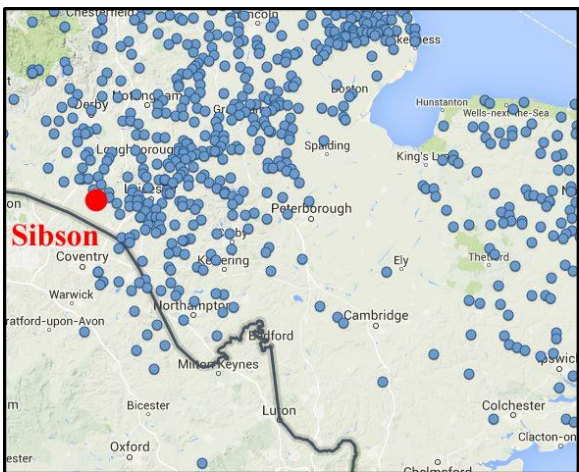


**Church services:** This is part of the Sheepy Benefice of thirteen churches. In Sibson's case there is a monthly Communion service and other occasional services.

**Location:** 19 Sheepy Road, Sheepy, Sibson CV13 6LF. NGR: SK35415000910. Lat/Long: 52.604835, -1.478570.

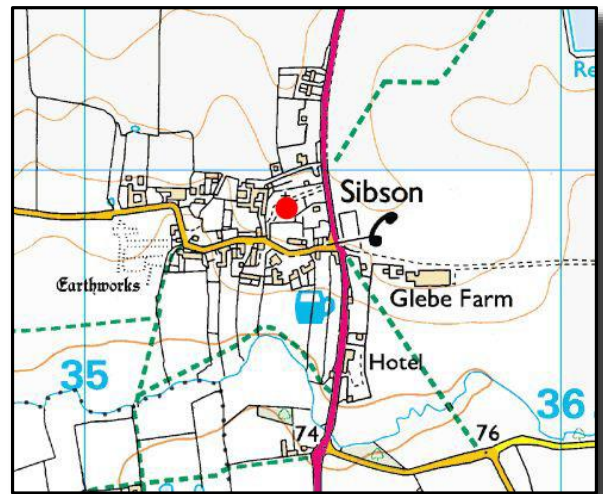
**Listed Grade:** II\*

Continuing our theme of the last two newsletters, the map below shows Sibson north of the Danelaw/Watling Street line (see *Botolph Patterns* towards the end of this issue) and right at the edge of the cluster of 'Viking-name' villages (marked in blue).

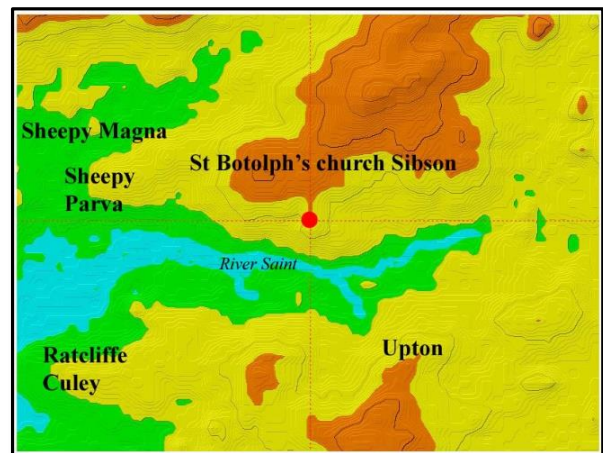


The church is positioned in the same sort of way that we have seen many times before in these pages, - on a hill - below the crest - overlooking a river valley. This case is slightly different

however because the valley is shallow and the church lies only 20 metres higher than the River Saint as it flows westwards to join the River Sence and then the Tweed (a namesake of the Scottish river).



Three miles to the southeast of Sibson lies the site of the 1485 Battle of Bosworth in which Richard III was killed. Who knows what this church might have seen in the aftermath of *that* event?



I was expecting to find that today's river was only a narrow stream but to my surprise it can, even now, offer some transport for a shallow-draught boat and in C7 before silting had occurred the possibilities would have been much greater. That other great transporter, Watling Street, lies only 3 miles south of the church.



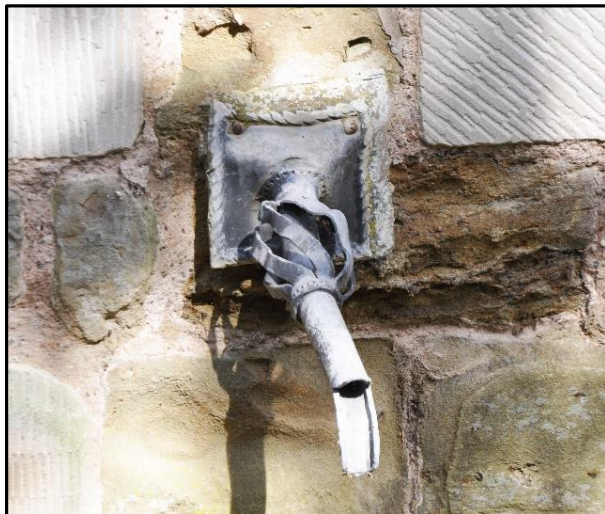


The village itself is mentioned in the 1086 Domesday Book although the first record of a church does not feature until 1154. The chancel is late C13 and most of its windows are of Early English style with Y-tracery (the east window is a particularly fine example). A C15 window of Perpendicular style has been substituted at the west end of the south wall of the chancel and below this is a 'Low-side window' - sometimes called a 'Leper's window' or 'squint.' We have seen this in other Botolph churches. This window has been filled in on the outside but its form can still be seen inside the chancel.



There is a lot of controversy about the purpose and origin of these small windows. It is usually found that they were installed in C13 and blocked up immediately after the Reformation in C16.

This has led to the theory that they are openings which allow those outside to hear the tiny Sanctus Bell that used to be rung at the highpoint of Holy Communion when the bread was broken. The use of such bells was prohibited after the Reformation so the windows became redundant and were closed to prevent them letting in the cold.



Working our way around the outside of the chancel we come to this elaborately-crafted lead spout (above) which drains from the piscina inside.



The leadwork of the piscina is an unusual variant on the simple stone bowl.

The picture below shows the East window with its fine Y-tracery.



At first glimpse, both inside and out, the church does not look very exciting. Outside, the C18 red brickwork overpowers what remains of the C14 coursed and squared limestone. Inside, the Victorians have, as they did so often, succeeded in sterilising much of the atmosphere of the church's ancient origins.







The result is a smart and clean building which has clearly been loved over the years. The Wylie family of Sibson House did much in the 1960s to add back to the church's character. The organ was donated in memory of Robert Wylie's mother. He also donated the oil lamps (suitably converted to electricity) and the magnificent standard brass candle-holders and brass lectern. On entering through the west door it is somewhat startling to find the village bier (so-placed perhaps to remind us of our mortality?).



Shortly afterwards comes a bathchair but its redemption is that it lies close to the font so that the beginning and end of life are remembered together.

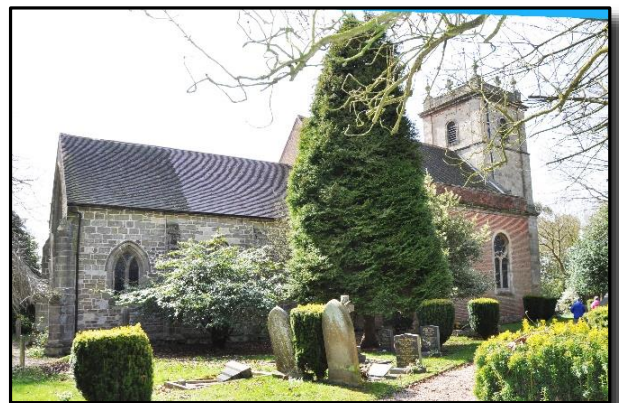


All these additions help to give character back to a church which would otherwise seem very bare.



In the first quarter of C18 there was a disaster when the steeple fell into the main body of the nave. If the steeple was anything like the size of nearby Ratcliffe-on-the-Wreake's church (featured last month) - then it is not surprising that it caused massive destruction which resulted in the building in 1726 of the new nave and reconstructed west tower.

This was carried out by the eminent master-builder and architect Francis Smith of Warwick (1672-1738). His eminence stemmed from Warwick town being devastated by a fire in 1694 and it was the town's restoration which brought Francis to fame and the acquisition of a universal reputation for scrupulous honesty and competence. One should not therefore dismiss Sibson's red brick nave out of hand but perhaps take a second look and value it as an exemplar of Francis Smith's expertise.



The tower has a ring of four bells dated 1605, 1733, 1751 and 1759 although the latter was recast in 1912. The clock was made in 1789 by Deacon of Barton-in-the-Beans (the glorious name of a village lying 5 miles to the northeast!). The C13 chancel is light and airy, due in part to the white walls but aided by the large clear-glazed east window.



To the right of the altar, in the southeast corner lies a stone effigy - a civilian figure thought to be the C14 rebuilder of the church. In his hands is a heart - he seems to be carrying the invocation of 'Lift up your hearts' to excess. Such portrayals are not uncommon however for there is a similar example in the church in nearby Sheepy Magna.



It was also in 1903 that, following internal plaster removal, the large size of the Low-side window (arrowed below) became apparent for the first time.



On the other side of the sanctuary near the north wall lies a beautifully-crafted brass representing John Moore, rector of the church from 1517 to 1532. Above him is Christ in Glory, seated on a rainbow.

On the south wall of the sanctuary is the piscina with its leaden bowl mentioned earlier. There are also three sedilia but only two of these had been visible until, during a restoration of the chancel in 1903, a third sedile was uncovered.



The Domesday Book records Sibson as *Sibetesdone* and it has also been known as *Sibbiston*, *Sybbystone*, *Sibstone* etc. The first rector of which there is a record was Robert de Massington (appointed 1201).

The patron until 1415 is said to have been the abbey of Lire in Normandy - although I can only find choices of a 'Vire' in Normandy or 'Liré' in Brittany. During the wars with France the patron was the King and in 1813 the patronage went to Pembroke College Oxford.

Lord Byron lived nearby in his younger days and it is likely that he worshipped here. He was tutored in the local rectory before some years later heading off for Rugby School and then Trinity College Cambridge. There are many references to him in the area: opposite the south gate of the church is *Lovelace Close* - a reference to Byron's daughter Augusta Ada Lovelace - a renowned mathematician and collaborator with Babbage in his invention of the first form of the computer.



## **Thanks**

My sincere thanks to Joan Moreton for giving up her time to open Sibson church and show us round.

## **Classification of the Sibson site.**

1154 is the church's earliest recorded date and this would tie in with the conquerors' ambitions of building English churches to Norman standards. But would they have chosen this site 'willy-nilly' or would they have built on a place of worship that already existed? My guess is the latter.

What would have been the origin of an earlier church? Sibson is on the edge of Danelaw territory. This suggests that, since the Norsemen started at the east and gradually moved westwards, Sibson might have been a later capture in which case, by the time they settled here, they may well have become Christians.

If these Vikings did indeed build a church - would it have been on ground that had previously been used for pagan worship or might it (in view of the Botolphian dedication) have been Christian?

My guess is that it was an established Christian church but surely too far away from Saint Botolph's Abbey of Icanho in Suffolk for him to have had a hand in founding it.

It seems logical to think that the original church was dedicated to Saint Botolph on the basis of the site being popular for the passage of wayfarers. Sibson lies on the road between Watling Street and Leicester (Roman *Ratae*) so it would have been a busy trackway. The proximity of Watling Street itself and the River Saint would have been added attractions. My guess therefore is that the classification would be B(ii) - the site of a Travellers' church founded between 800 and 1066.

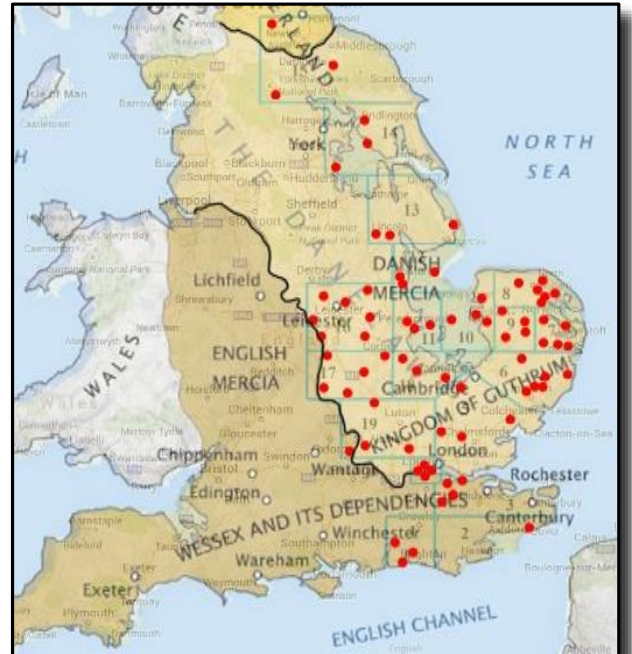
## **The Botolph Patterns Part 3.**

*(Continued from last month)*

Following publication of last month's *Botolphian* Dr Sam Newton questioned my use of the term 'Danelaw.' He was quite right to do so because although many people use it loosely as I did (*mea culpa*) it is a quite specific term.

To put the matter straight: 'Danelaw' refers to a political boundary line which was specified by King Alfred, in his treaty with the Viking leader Guthrum in c. 886 (designed to allow the Danes self-rule) in order to make it clear exactly where his jurisdiction would abut that of Guthrum: *'up on the Thames, and then up on the Lea, and along the Lea unto its source, then straight to Bedford, then up on the Ouse to Watling Street.'*

The Danes were scattered over a wide area and Danelaw required that any who were on Alfred's patch would have to abide by his laws but not if they were on Guthrum's patch. The problem was that my October map (below) was eight years or so before Danelaw was decreed. It showed the area generally considered to have been under Danish control in 878.



And it is *this map* which matches so accurately the distribution of Botolph churches. It shows the Danes (and most of the Botolph churches) to the east of a line running down the easterly borders of Cheshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire. These were the bordering counties of Mercia which brings us to the point: was it Mercia that kept the Botolph churches *out* or was it the Danes who fostered and nurtured the churches in this area ... or was there a third and entirely different factor?

For those of you who have been following BBC2's excellent Thursday night serialisation of Bernard Cornwell's *The Last Kingdom* you will have seen last week how 'The Great Heathen Army' were still (in 869 - some four years after their arrival) very disinclined to make any conciliatory moves towards Christianity. King Edmund's death in that episode was, incidentally, at the same period as the Danes sacked and destroyed St Botolph's abbey of Icanho. (Botolph himself had died 190 years earlier).

It looks however as if, over the next nine years, the Danes' characters mellowed. They liked England and thousands of them settled here - apparently living amicably beside the indigenous Brits. No doubt the Danes still had warlike tendencies which flared up from time to time but generally it seems they became of quieter natures and perhaps started to convert to Christianity. There were still many however who were focussed on capturing Wessex and their attempts were not finally thwarted until 878 when Guthrum was forced to surrender.

The result of this was that in 878 Guthrum became a Christian and agreed to live quietly ruling his subjects in East Anglia.

Once such a warlord accepted Christianity it was customary for his subjects to follow suit. Guthrum died in 890.

*To be continued ...*

#### **My grateful thanks ...**

... to my son Rob for donating his Nikon camera lens to me so that I was not 'to be found lacking' at the Annual Luncheon. Stupidly I had dropped my camera while taking photographs in Siena, and this had resulted in the flanges breaking off the heavy lens. Rob is way ahead of me in photographic expertise and now uses more complex lenses so he kindly made me a gift of an identical lens from his collection.

#### **Readers' letters and emails.**

**1. Sam Newton** wrote about the Danelaw boundaries as noted previously. Thank you Sam - I appreciate your input and your interest.

**2. William Howard** (ex rector of sb Grimston) pointed out that Grimston lays claim to its Danish origin by virtue of the 'Grim' part of its name (although the 'ton' part qualifies it also). He says that Domesday has it as *Grimastuna*.

**3. Father Pachomius** wrote from the USA with some kind words about the fact that the last issue of *The Botolphian* introduced him to parts of British history which had hitherto been unknown to him.

**4. Guy Hartfall** queried the October letter from Joanna and George Comer regarding the founder of Queens College Cambridge.

**5. Joanna Comer** wrote back explaining that her husband George is a direct descendant of Andrew

Dockett who, in 1446 obtained charters from Henry VI which eventually resulted in the foundation of Queens College by Margaret of Anjou. (Actually it is rather more complicated than that but this is the answer 'in a nutshell').

**6. Steve Williamson** from Grimston wrote to introduce me to their benefice's magnificent new website at [www.ggmbenefice.uk](http://www.ggmbenefice.uk). The benefice now has 10 parishes of which Revd Jane Holmes is Team Rector. Revd Judith Pollard has joined the team and Jan Willson remains as churchwarden.

**7. Revd Tim L'Estrange**, our president, wrote: 'Please give my warmest greetings to everyone gathered in Cambridge today for the Society of St Botolph luncheon. As you know, the Society is very dear to my heart, and it is a great sadness to me that my domestic situation has prevented me from attending this year. I do hope that everyone has a happy time, and returns home safely.'

**8. Colin Potter** and his cousin Gillian (both from Pembrokeshire) have been heating up the email wires and helping me to solve the mystery of an errant St Botolph's 'chapel' in their locality.

**9. Graham Jones** also joined the correspondence since it was he who started the Pembrokeshire trail at our first Luncheon when he gave his wonderful talk 'The Saint at the Gate and the King on the Shore.'

**10. Justin Scale** telephoned (on the same subject) and was able to provide me with an exact location. I intend to give full details of this story in the December issue but many thanks to all the above for their generous help.

**11. Diane LeMare:** Great news comes from **St Botolph's Heene (Worthing, Sussex)**. I had been under the misapprehension that this church was no longer in use. It was indeed condemned three years ago when the Diocese issued a notice of its proposed closure. The church resisted however and has remained open and battling all this time. On 7 October 2015 the churchwardens received notice that the Church Commissioners had *rejected* the Diocese's plans with the joyful result that the church will not now be closed. I am delighted to welcome Heene's churchwardens Diane LeMare and Paul Wadey as members and look forward to hearing of their church's future progress.

#### **Endnotes**

Please do not hesitate to write to me or send an email to [botolph@virginmedia.com](mailto: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!



**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](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.

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.