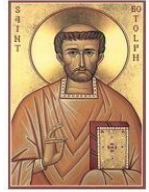




The Botolphian

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: 48

1st April 2017

Highlights this month

- St Botolph's church, Limpenhoe, Norfolk.
- It gives me great pleasure to welcome the following new members: Dr Lesley Hardy (Canterbury); Dr Angela Conyers (Folkestone); Carla Reeks (Folkestone);
- Correspondence from Graham Jones, Heather Flack, John Sennett, Emma Rose Barber, Roger Cordey, Rose Doherty and John Burnapp.
- **Please note in your diaries that this year's Annual luncheon in Cambridge (venue to be announced) will still be at 12.30 for 1 p.m. but a few days earlier than usual on:**

Wednesday 4th October 2017

Editorial

I see that this is issue number 48 which means that today marks the fourth anniversary of *The Botolphian*. Many thanks to you all for your loyalty and letters of encouragement. I am glad to say that we have lost only a very few members over the years but have gained a great number more.



John Sennett kindly sent me this picture of the Blessing of the Snowdrops at St Botolph's, Swyncombe, Oxfordshire. I hope you can see the mass of snowdrops in the picture – this year they were accompanied by a smattering of snow (see Correspondence below).

The Botolphian has changed considerably since it started. As I have gained both confidence and interest the church features have filled out and I now feel quite embarrassed when I look back at the early ones which I feel deserve a 'second edition.' They will receive this in due course. Ultimately I intend to publish a gazetteer entitled *Voyages Around Botolph Churches* and in this of course the churches that were featured earlier will get a better showing. Over the years not only has membership increased (we have about 420 now) but so has the number of 'accredited' Botolph Churches.

We started with '70-ish' and this number is probably still correct if it is applied to extant churches which still bear St Botolph's name. There have always been records of sites and other churches which have, in the past, been dedicated to St Botolph for one reason or another but where the dedication has now altered. I consider all these sites to be valid candidates and the number has now risen to 82. Last month of course we added Hanley Castle Worcestershire to the list and this month I am adding Buttsbury in Essex.

I had forgotten about this parish which I first read about in Janet Cooper's excellent book *The Church Dedications and Saints' Cults of Medieval Essex* ISBN 978-1-904244-67-7 (page 67). Having looked into the matter further I believe that this site has some potential – but more research is needed.

Church Feature

Limpenhoe, Norfolk.

Approach: *Getting to Limpenhoe is interesting but tricky. We approached from the south, which meant crossing the River Yare via the Reedham Chain Ferry – which was actually rather enjoyable. (Thanks to Trevor Thornton for this photograph).*



Once across it takes just 6 minutes to drive up Ferry Road which, after half a mile becomes Freethorpe Road; 0.7 miles later turn left into Norwich Road. After 0.7 miles this becomes Freethorpe Road again(!). After another 0.4 miles turn right into Church Road – which bends round to the left and you will see the church on your left. Leave your car in the grassy parking area which is on your left just short of the church.

If you come from the north you will miss the fun (and perhaps the frustrations?) of the ferry and you will probably start from the A47. If coming from Norwich turn off right towards Cantley & Beighton on the B1140 and then immediately follow the road round to the left. Stay on the B1140 High Road. Turn left at the Cock Tavern and follow the Norwich Road towards Southwood. Go straight over at the Cow Meadow Road crossing following the signpost to Limpenhoe (Norwich Road). Bear right down Southwood Road. The road bends sharply to the left and then you will find the church on your right and the grassy car park a little further on.

Location: Church Road, Limpenhoe, Cantley, Norwich NR13 3JA; Lat/long: 52.5809, 1.5341; Grid Reference TG3953003992.

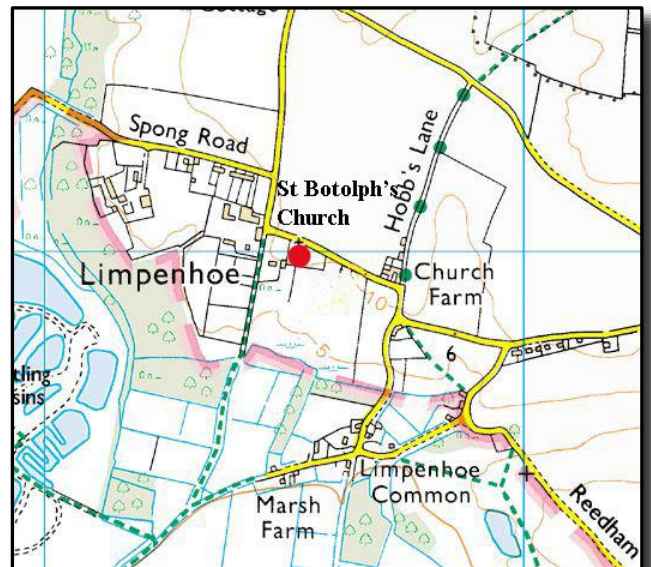
Key: *The church is open during the summer months (April – end of October).*

Rector: Revd Martin Greenland (Rector) 014493 750393, rector@aclechurch.plus.com or the Associate Priest, Revd Dr Lorna Allies on 01493 296321, lorna.allies@gmail.com.

Benefice: *The Benefice is Acle and Yare (8 parishes): Acle, Beighton, Cantley, Freethorpe, Halvergate, Limpenhoe, Reedham and Wickhampton Website : www.abychurches.co.uk.*

Services: *Variable – check the website above.*

Listed Grade: II*



There are two ways to approach this church – either from the east - walking across the grass from the car park or . . .



... from the north if somebody will drop you off at the entrance.



The church is constructed of knapped flint with stone dressings.



It was largely reconstructed during the last years of C19 – what we see as today's chancel being then added to the original church.



The east window appears to be a C19 construction (rather than having been recycled from another church). The tracery is finely crafted ...



... with attention to detail as evidenced by the happy-looking king and queen at the hood moulding ends.



The church literature tells us that this east window 'was designed and installed by a firm in Great Yarmouth who were also responsible for designing the reredos and the pulpit, but that firm is no longer in existence and all traces of records seem to have been lost during the last war.' The inclusion of 'the reredos and the pulpit' in this statement makes it clear that the company did not just install the east window's glasswork.



It is a shame that all records have been lost since the firm obviously had a very skilled master-mason as can be seen from the high quality of the window tracery in the chancel's south wall.



The picture above is included for comparison. It is of a window which was installed in another otherwise very attractive church which was built during the same period that Limpenhoe was restored. The tracery has clean lines which were clearly *this* mason's concept of how a 'modern' C19 church window should look. In my view though, the mystery mason of Great Yarmouth had the better concept.



In most churches of course, access is through the south doorway but in Limpenhoe this 'Norman architectural surprise' is blocked up. Whereas the rest of the building's hardware (within its C19 shell) dates from C14 at the earliest, this gem of a doorway must have been built in late C12.



There are several areas on the sandstone quoins which could represent the remains of weather-worn Mass Dials.



The two on the left side are perhaps better candidates than those on the right. I sent copies

of this picture to one of our resident experts, Tony Wood of the British Sundial Society and he believes I might be correct. The B.S.S previously had no record of there being Mass Dials at Limpenhoe.



The squat 2-stage western tower is C15 to the level of the nave roof and C19 above this. Within it on the left side of this northern wall you can see the polygonal staircase tower.

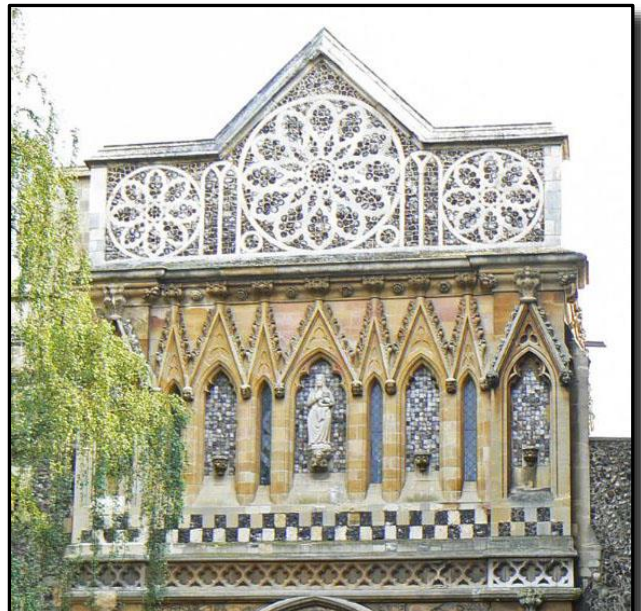


The west window is C15 Perpendicular style with plain glass. With regard to the base of the tower, I have seen several flint churches which have these patterns. At first glance it always looks to me as if somebody has laid a ladder against the base and the photographer has forgotten to remove it before taking the photograph.

This is however an example of *flushwork* which is a decorative combination in the same flat plane of (usually black) flint and (usually) light limestone.



The technique started in early C14 and peaked during the wool boom of late C15.



One of the best and earliest examples is seen on the inside of the Ethelbert Gate at Norwich Cathedral.



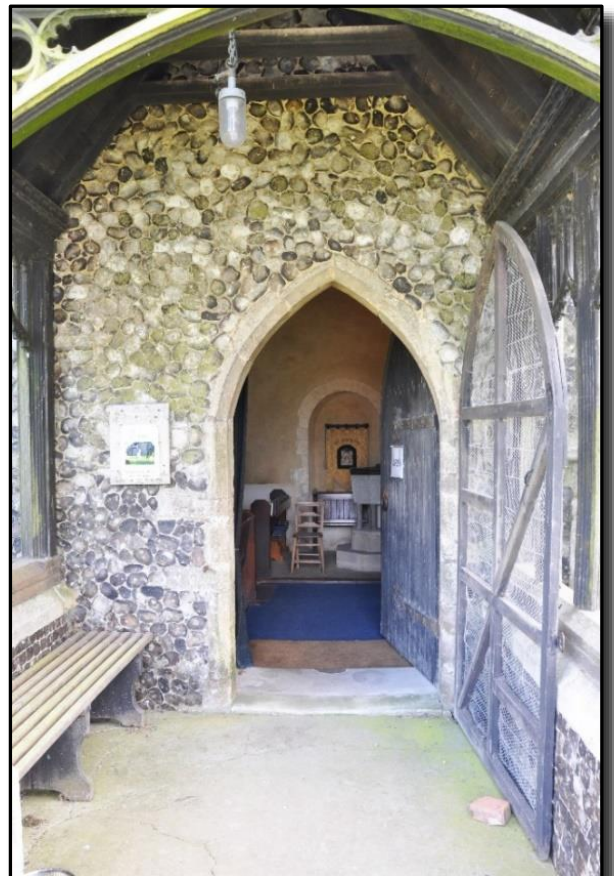
Our very own St Botolph's Church at Iken sports the same sort of façade.



The top picture of the pair above is a sketch of Limpenhoe church before its restoration in 1881. It shows the same flushwork at the tower base which means, as just discussed, that the tower itself can be of a date no earlier than C14. The C12 Norman doorway is still in the same position although it seems to have a path leading up to it suggesting that in those days it was still in use. Note the lack of a chancel annexe in the upper picture and the three different style windows which feature in both pictures (from left to right: Decorated, Perpendicular and Lancet); the two buttresses are in a similar position in both pictures. In its early days before the tower was added in early C14 the little church would have been a humble unicellular building.



The C19 north porch has a gabled timber frame, perpendicular-style tracery and a flint and stone base.



A security gate bolts over the main door when the church is locked.



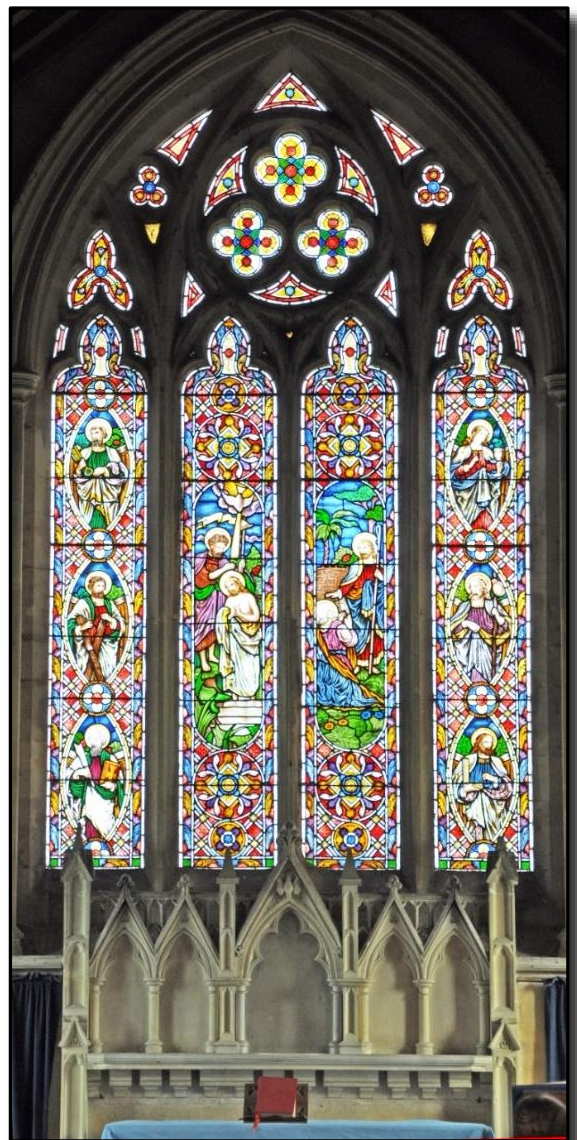
The door handle is less spectacular than the legend which accompanies it. It is said to have started its second life on the door of St Edmund's Church in the nearby village of Southwood. Prior to that, the locals would have us believe that it was attached to a treasure chest buried at the bottom of 'Callow Pit' in Southwood but when the treasure seekers tried to pull the chest out of the pit it fell apart – leaving them with just the handle!



As is right and proper, the first thing that greets us as we enter the church is the font. The bowl is octagonal, made of Purbeck marble, supported by a central column and eight colonnettes. The unit dates from C13 so one suspects that it and the Norman doorway might be old friends looking askance at the upstart additions of later centuries. There is a theory however that this font might be an interloper recycled from Southwood – perhaps replacing an older Norman one which would have been an even greater friend to the south doorway.



Great care seems to have been taken by the C19 restorers to present the congregation with a theatrical scenario in the best sense of the words.



The pleasant three-bay nave draws the eye to the 'stage' - a beautifully-sculpted reredos surmounted by a magnificent east window.



The picture is framed by an attractive chancel arch
...



... which is flanked by another of the 'lost mason of Great Yarmouth's' (henceforth referred to as LMGY – I really wish I knew his name) masterpieces – a tastefully carved pulpit.



The columns of the chancel arch are C15 but the capitals and the arch itself are C19 restorations to which LMGY has added more skill and humour. A bearded squire looks out from the left side ...



... whilst his lady peers across at us from the right.



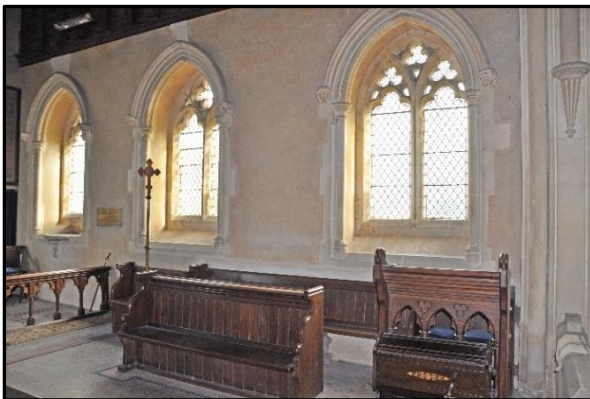
Although LMGY might be a mystery man, the person who commissioned and paid for his work was not. The hero of the day (an unintentional pun) was Revd Theodore Day who was vicar here for 35 years from 1871 to 1906. It was he who had the foresight and the finance to push this project forwards. As well as providing the east window, the reredos and the re-carved pulpit, he also gifted this organ which is notable for having a patented 'Nag's Head' type of swell box and being mounted on wheels so that it can be 'drawn out of its chamber on iron rails.'



The church is very conscientious about safety there being a large number of fire extinguishers around - together with a suitably-marked escape door in the chancel.



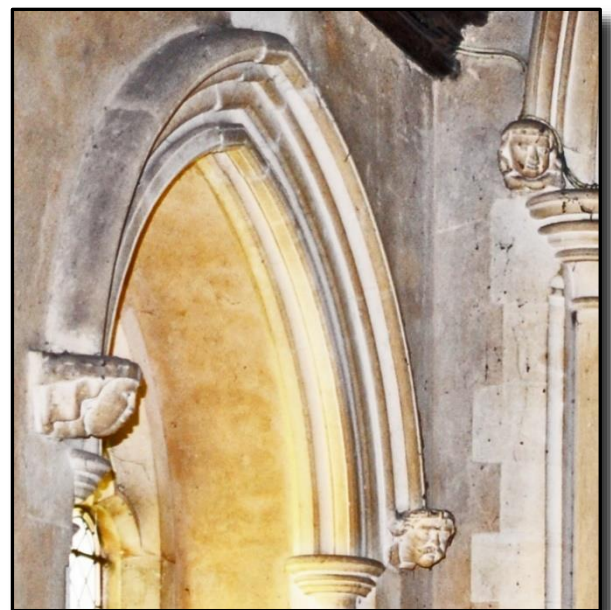
The northern side of the sanctuary is illuminated by a reproduction Decorated-style window with two more faces peering at us from the hood moulding. These look to me to be quite similar to the king and queen on the outside of the east window.



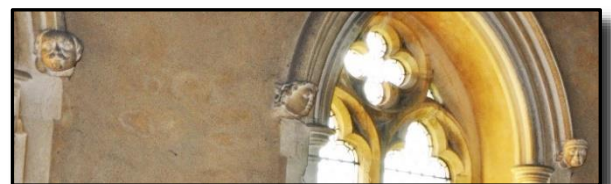
The south side of the chancel has three more reproduction Decorated-style windows.



And once again the LMGY has excelled himself by this lovely piscina with its fluted bowl.



More heads on the arch mouldings of the chancel's south wall and inside the chancel arch.



The mason never seemed to miss a chance to add further ones.



A portable pump organ (harmonium) is available for emergencies. These instruments were in popular use in smaller churches and private homes in C19.

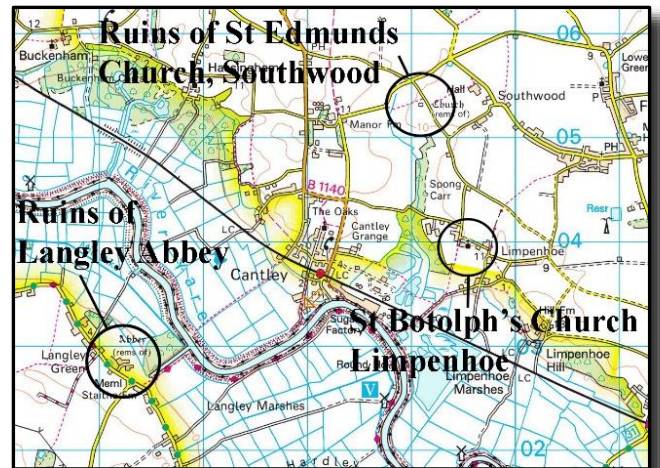


A view towards the west end of the church. There is no vestry as such so, as with many churches, the base of the bell-tower seen at the end of the aisle, acts as a store-room.



And in here I found this wonderful iron parish chest. It was, once again, inherited from St Edmund's Church Southwood and I should perhaps, at this point, explain what happened

regarding the connection between the two churches.



The village of Southwood is a mile or so up the road to the north-north-west of Limpenhoe and it seems that its parish church of St Edmund's became redundant in 1697.



All that can be seen of St Edmund's now, as Anthony Williment's photograph shows above, is a bundle of ruins covered by vegetation. It was however from this once-proud church that many items came to Limpenhoe. Indeed it is said that the restoration of St Botolph's in 1881 by the builder A.S. Hewitt was somehow connected with the demise of St Edmund's Church. How this can be so with a gap of nearly two centuries between the events (from St Edmund's redundancy in 1697 to Limpenhoe's rebirth in 1881) I am not too sure. The comment may simply refer to the fact that once the decision was made to restore the church at Limpenhoe, the builders chose to use some of the materials which had lain unused in Southwood for the previous 180 years.

Hewitt also did some restoration work at All Saints Church Bighton, some three miles to the north of St Botolph's but there are no obvious signs of similarity between the churches today. It seems that Hewitt started his restoration work at Limpenhoe by removing the thatched roof - whereupon the building's walls collapsed

outwards. If true this would have made a disconcerting start.

As I have shown above however, the windows in the south wall of the nave have ended up in almost exactly the same position as they were in the pre-1881 church so they were either carefully replaced or the damage to that wall was not as catastrophic as tradition tells us.

What *was* quite catastrophic however was that the inside of each wall carried paintings – presumably frescoes – which have now been lost.



Just two more views to show – the first is of the doorway leading to the stairs of the bell tower. The church has two bells, one of which came from . . . (you guessed it) . . . Southwood.



The final view is of yet another Southwood import – a C17 Flemish tapestry which hangs inside Limpenhoe's south wall. It depicts the Sacrificing of Isaac – and what a story that is!

Classification:

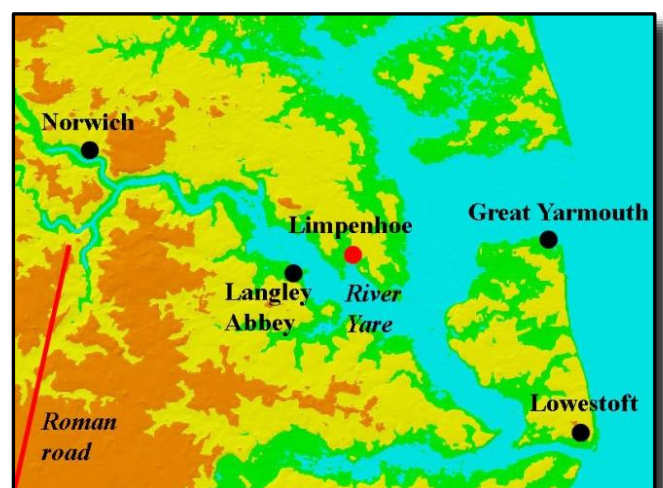
So who conceived the inspiration for building this church and why?

I have seen no suggestion that there was a church on this site before the Norman Conquest – and there is no mention of a church at Limpenhoe in the 1086 Domesday Book (but this does not mean a great deal since churches were often omitted). Yet the records tell us that, as early as 1198, William de Redham had, by virtue of a fine, to hand over his right in the church to Sir Robert Fitz-Roger who, at that time, was the lord of the manor. He had been sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk from 1190 to 1194 and served in that position again from 1197 to 1200. During the hiatus it seems that he found time, in 1195, to found the Premonstratensian abbey of Langley which was built just across the river from Limpenhoe (see the Ordnance Survey Map on page 10). He colonised the house with brethren from his country seat of Alnwick in Northumberland and the abbot of Alnwick thus became father abbot to Langley.

One would imagine that since both St Botolph's Limpenhoe and Langley Abbey were, by 1198, in Sir Robert's hands, the church would have become included as one of the many Norfolk parishes owned by Langley at that time.

For some reason however, Sir Robert must have kept the church for himself because it was one of his descendants, a John Fitz-Robert, who eventually transferred it (once again as part payment of a fine) to the abbot of Langley in about 1311. It was at this date that one Henry de Bynham was recorded as St Botolph's Church Limpenhoe's first incumbent. He was sponsored and installed by the Prior and Convent of Langley Abbey - as were the next fourteen incumbents, the last of whom was installed in 1402.

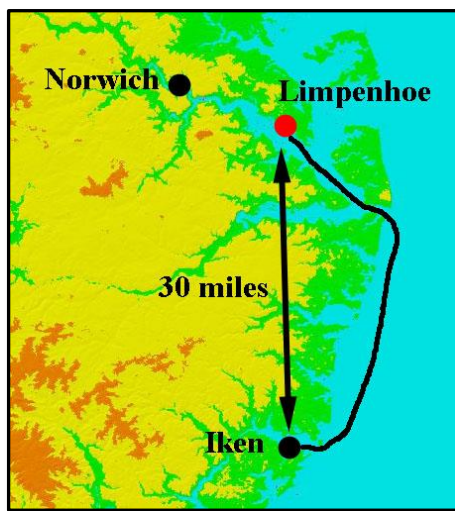
Since the church clearly existed for at least 113 years prior to 1311, there must have been other incumbents ushering their congregations through that Norman doorway the date of which tallies with the 1198 date of Sir Robert's acquisition. Sadly these names have been lost to history.



Turning to clues offered by the landscape: in some contrast to the spectacle we see today, the topography between C7 and C12 would have been very much like that shown in the picture above - with Langley Abbey and Limpenhoe sitting on opposite banks of a much wider River Yare. We must note the 'hoe' in Limpenhoe - which echoes the suffixes shared by Icanho and Plymouth Hoe - and means 'a spur of land looking out over water.' You will note in the map above how the contour lines suggest that Limpenhoe presided over a narrow marshy inlet heading northwest. This is just the sort of location which would have suited a C7 foundation.

The evidence we have therefore suggests that the origins of the church we see today date back to c. 1190 - but this is *too early* for us to ascribe Hanseatic origins to it since Norfolk's international wool trade did not get properly underway until 100 years *later* than this. We must therefore look for another factor which influenced its origin. The church's prominent position on the River Yare's highway to Norwich is an obvious contender.

This watery highway suggests therefore that Limpenhoe could be another 'Travellers' church. But could we go further than that? Is there a chance that Botolph might have founded it himself? He was renowned as a traveller and, as the crow flies, the distance from Iken to Limpenhoe is only 30 miles.



It seems to me that if he were the founding missionary he is reputed to be . . . and if Iken really was the site of his abbey of Icanho, and if we bear in mind Norwich's importance as a place to go to, then it would be surprising if Botolph did *not* visit Limpenhoe. Maybe he even founded a little wooden church there that (if it had been spared by the Vikings) the sheriff of the county decided to rebuild in stone in 1190.

I would (very slightly tongue-in-cheek and with both fingers crossed) give it an A classification.

Readers' letters and emails.

1. **Graham Jones** wrote on the subject of my announcement last month that another St Botolph's Church site had been found at Hanley Castle near Worcester. I mentioned my excitement about the site being in *Magonsaete* territory but Graham wrote to point out that the site is in fact in *Hwicce* territory as 'their common border ran in part along the crest of the Malverns to the west of Hanley Castle.' Thank you for pointing this out Graham.

2. **Heather Flack** lives within 30 miles of Hanley Castle and wrote on the subject of the graffito on the doorway of Morley St Botolph's church. She kindly looked for it in Matthew Champion's 'Medieval Graffiti' but found no match. Heather also supported Graham's view on the *Hwicce*. She added the interesting facts that the Diocese of Worcester was founded in about 680 and that Tim Bridges, the expert on the physical structure of Worcestershire churches, says that there is no Anglo-Saxon fabric to be found in any of them.

3. **Graham Jones** in a further email (this interesting debate went on for a little while with me protesting my innocence but finally becoming reconciled to Graham's infinitely greater knowledge) pointed out that 'conventional wisdom has it that the dioceses of Worcester and Hereford were founded for the kingdoms of the Hwicce and Magonsaete respectively.'

4. **John Sennett** sent the snowdrop picture printed in the editorial and mentioned that this was their 21st year of Snowdrop Teas and that this year they raised £6,500 over three weekends for church funds. Swyncombe is renowned for its snowdrops - do make a note to go and see them next year.

5. **Emma Rose Barber** thanked me for mentioning the Bardolf family in the last newsletter. Emma Rose has undertaken a lot of research on psalters and asked if I was aware of the Bardolf Psalter in Lambeth Palace Library, MS 233. She noted that during her research in Norfolk she had great difficulty in finding out anything about the Bardolfs so is grateful for the lead given in *The Botolphian*.

6. **Roger Cordey** of Morley St Botolph wrote a couple of extremely kind emails with compliments about the feature I wrote on his church. He asked - and I willingly gave - my permission for him to offer free copies of the feature as gifts for visitors and he is going to have a leather-bound copy printed to keep in the church. I feel greatly honoured!

7. **Rose Doherty** wrote from Boston USA asking if I had come across any Green Men whilst researching St Botolph churches. She attached

the photograph below which shows a 'Green Man' in Boston USA.



I recall seeing 'Green Men' in several churches but the only location I can immediately call to mind is one in Swyncombe – the photograph of which is to be found in the January 2014 issue of *The Botolphian*. Both Rose and I would be pleased to hear of other churches which possess the 'Green Man' feature.

8. **John Burnapp**, in response to my comment that there are seven Botolph churches which live in villages ending in '-ley,' pointed out that Aspley Guise should be added - making it eight. The name, he tells us, came from Aspen Ley (glade) which was part of the land given to the deGuise family by William the Conqueror. Thanks again John.

---O---

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!

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: 'Hanseatic' churches.

D: None of the above.

Typical Characteristics of Early St Botolph Churches.

- 1. All are in the eastern half of England
- 2. Most have Saxon foundations.
- 3. Many lie with 3 miles of a Roman road or well-used waterway.
- 4. Most are situated close to the bottom of an escarpment but well clear of water levels.
- 5. Many are strategically placed in areas which represent the beginnings, middles and ends of long journeys.

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Folkestone, Kent. 1st May 2013.