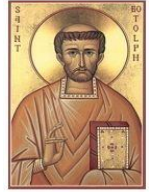




The Botolphian

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: 53

1st September 2017

Highlights this month

- St Botolph's church, Botesdale, Suffolk.
- It gives me great pleasure to welcome the following new members: Father Stephen Anderson (Priest-in-charge at St Botolph's Cambridge); Jackie Didymus from St Botolph's Church at Heene in Sussex.
- Correspondence from Peter van Demark, Giles Clapp, John McConnell, Ray Theakston, Gillian Machorton and David Gallimore.

Editorial

I received some interesting correspondence following the Boston Lincolnshire feature last month.

Peter Van Demark invited me to view the pictures he took on a previous visit to Boston. Amongst these I found a picture of 'Mason's Marks.' Now some of you might recall the mystery mark (see below) which I found on the porch at Morley St Botolph and Peter's photograph made me wonder if this might be what it was.



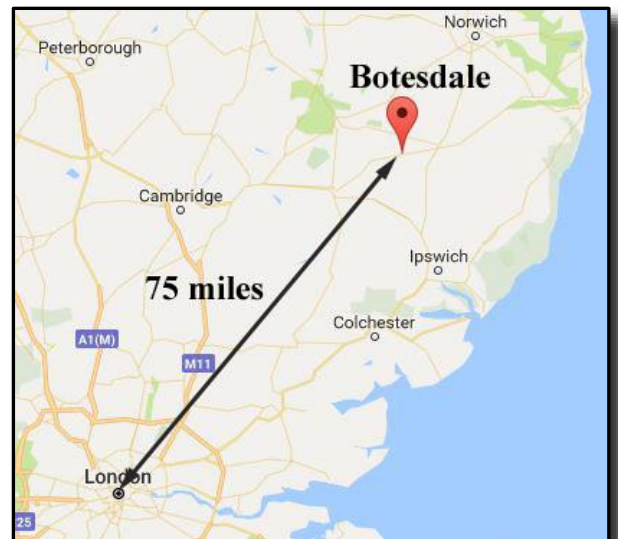
Accordingly I sent the picture to Giles Clapp at The Worshipful Company of Masons in London for his opinion and you can see his answer in this month's 'Correspondence'. To our mutual

amusement Giles and I discovered that we live within a mile of each other.

I am pleased to report that we have a good number coming to the Annual Luncheon in Cambridge this year (4th October). We shall again be meeting at the Hilton Cambridge City Hotel. I am still awaiting the new menus they promised and I will let you have these as soon as possible. Many thanks to you all for your support.

Church Feature

Botesdale, Suffolk.



Approach: From Bury St Edmunds take the A143 towards Diss. After 11 miles or so turn left onto the Bury Road at the sign to Hinderclay, Rickingham and Botesdale. Just over a mile later you will find the church on your right - you will need to cross to the other side of the road to park outside it.

Location: *The Street, Botesdale, Suffolk IP22 1BU; Lat/Long: 52.3428. 1.0062.*

Key: *A key is reputedly kept at the cottage next door but I have not verified this and on the website Revd Chris Norburn invites would-be visitors to contact him directly.*

Rector: *Revd Chris Norburn, The Rectory, Bury Road, Rickinghall, Diss IP22 1HA, Tel: 01379 898685.*

Benefice: *The Benefice comprises All Saints Redgrave (St Mary's Redgrave is a redundant church but occasional services are held there), St Mary's Rickinghall and St Botolph's Botesdale.*

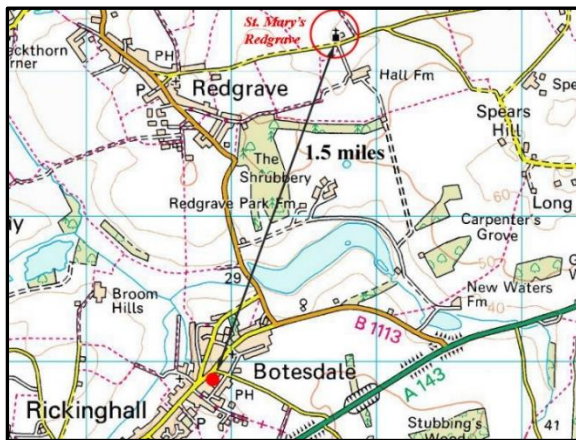
Listed Grade: II*

And now . . . (to paraphrase Monty Python) "for something rather different"

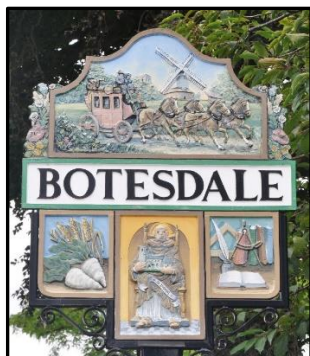
A Chapel of Ease.

We have mentioned these in *The Botolphian* from time to time in the past.

A Chapel of Ease is defined as 'an Anglican chapel built within the bounds of the parish for the convenience of parishioners living a long distance from the parish church.'



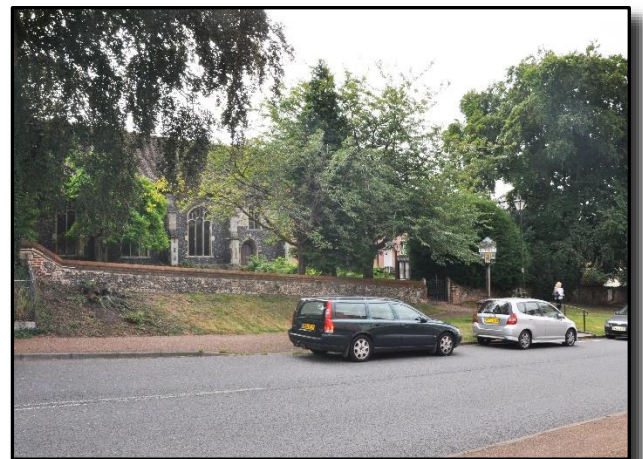
The parish church in this case was St Mary's at Redgrave and the Botesdale Chapel of Ease lies one and a half miles to the south-south-west of this.



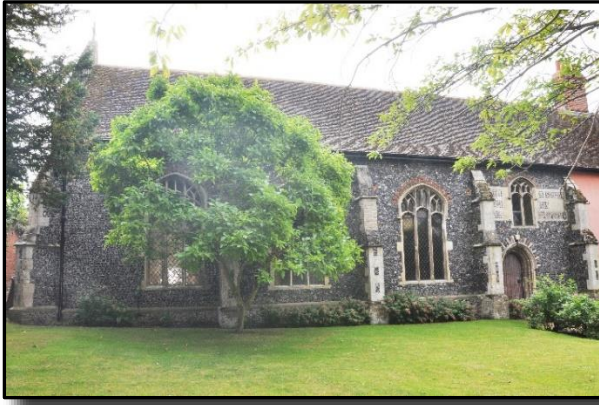
The village sign features a stagecoach, farm produce, literary paraphernalia and . . . our very own be-sandaled Saint Botolph sitting in an Abbot's chair and clutching a church - but which church I wondered?



I thought perhaps that it might be St Botolph's at Iken - but that has no clerestory and the only other two Botolph Churches that it matches are Skidbrooke in Lincolnshire and Trunch in Norfolk. It might also perhaps have been loosely modelled on the aforementioned St Mary's Church Redgrave.



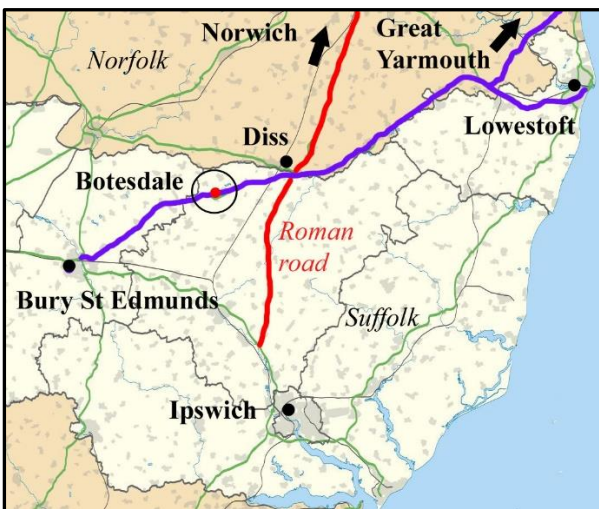
The church is set back from the road which is on a rise.



Sadly it frustrates the interested photographer by shyly hiding its face behind a massive tree. There are other lovely trees in the grounds including this one bearing its fruit.



So it is time for our story to relate the connection between Saint Botolph and this little village which lies tellingly on the main road (seen in blue below) between Bury St Edmunds and the coast.

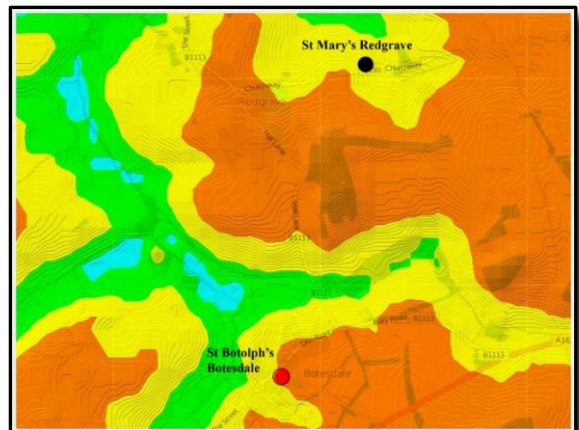


The story is basically a matter of good old-fashioned business enterprise.

By the turn of C12 the road between Bury St Edmunds and Diss had become very busy. This was only *partly* due to our old friend the wool trade (the sheep and/or their products in this case usually heading for Norwich). *Most* of the increased traffic on the coast road from Bury St Edmunds was on account of the herring industry in which Great Yarmouth was the prime player - herring being the cheap staple diet of the medieval English. By C12 the port had its own annual herring fair which, perversely, was run by the Cinque Ports fishermen of *Kent* which naturally caused great local resentment. The residents were partly appeased in 1209 when King John granted a charter to Great Yarmouth which made it self-governing. Sometime later, in 1277, Edward I conceded that Great Yarmouth and the Cinque Ports could have *joint* authority over the fair but, unsurprisingly, this did little to resolve the problem and in 1297 the Great Yarmouth ships fought out the principle with the ships of Kent in a battle off the Belgian coast.

It was in this atmosphere of trading competition that a charter was granted, in 1275, for a fair to be held in the area now known as Botesdale. A charter for a Thursday market had already been granted in 1227. The land was owned by the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds and the institution saw every reason to exploit this possession. Although the abbey was dedicated to Saint Edmund, next of importance was Saint Botolph to whom the abbey contained a prominent shrine in which his relics were stored (see Footnote at end). The monks decided that the new fair should be held during the week of his patronal festival (17th June) and be called 'St Botolph's Fair.' [Incidental note: the word 'fair' is derived from the Latin *feriae* meaning 'Holy days'].

As a result of the extra activity on this hitherto inconsequential piece of road a new settlement sprang up to which St Botolph ultimately lent his name - and 'dale' was attached on account of the valley it overlooked.

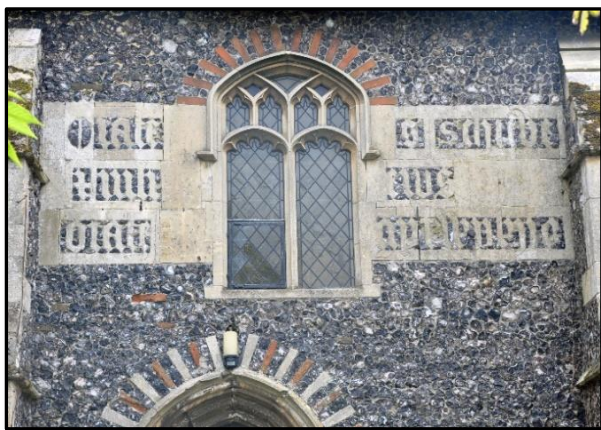


The picture above illustrates the fact that the presence of the valley made the one and a half mile journey to the parish church of St Mary at Redgrave all the more tiresome from the point of view of the Botesdale parishioners and once the community was large enough they applied for and were granted permission to build a Chapel of Ease in their new hamlet. The first reference to this is found in a 1338 court roll.

Having the chapel was one thing - and there is no doubt that Bury St Edmunds would have been happy to sponsor it but when in c. 1470 the offer came of a gift of land from a wealthy landowner called John Shrive the income from which would be sufficient to provide a permanent priest to lead Masses while offering regular prayers for the soul of the donor and his family, the abbey were quick to accept. This officially modified the chapel's use to that of a 'chantry.'



As one walks up the gravel path towards the building's front door, its archway attractively picked out by the red, white and black voussoir stones, an inscription is all-apparent. Looking closely one can see that the writing has been interrupted by the insertion of the window.



Nevertheless we can still read:

*Orate --- -----s schrebe
-t iuli--- ----- eius
Orate --- -----gyt wykjic*

which originally read:

*Orate pro animabus Johannis Schrebe
Et Juliane uxoris ejus
Orate pro anima Bregyt Wykes*

Pray for the soul of John Shrive
And his wife Juliana
Pray for the soul of Bridget Wykes
(Some say this should be *Margaret* Wykes)



There is a conundrum here because there is insufficient space for all those missing characters. British Listed Buildings records the church as having been rebuilt in c.1500 and not endowed as a chantry until after that but it seems more likely that the inscription tablets and the large perpendicular-style windows were first inserted in about 1480. The large windows might have weakened the structure necessitating the addition of buttress sometime later (see below) and it was probably the installation of these and the gallery window which necessitated 'jiggling' the inscription stones leaving us with the hotchpotch we see today.

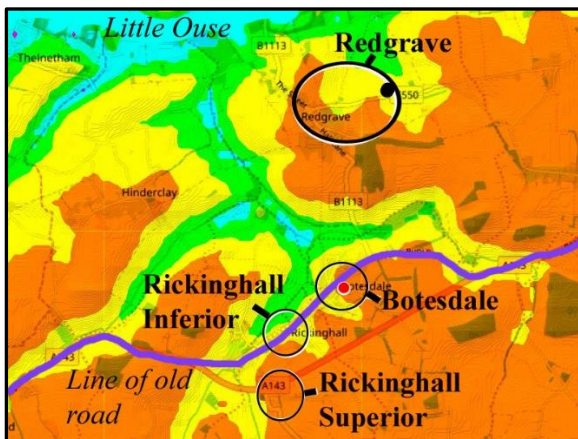
Sadly it was the very fact of the inscription proclaiming the building's use as a chantry that led to its demise. In 1547 Edward VI issued a decree that all chantries were to be dissolved and in spite of the villagers' protests that they had paid for the construction of the chapel and that its use as a chantry was insignificant, their pleas fell on deaf ears. The building was stripped and sold to Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper of the Seal to Queen Elizabeth I, and he turned it into a grammar school of some importance in 1577.

The school hours were from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. except in November, December and January when they started at 7 a.m. All children had to be able to read when they were admitted.

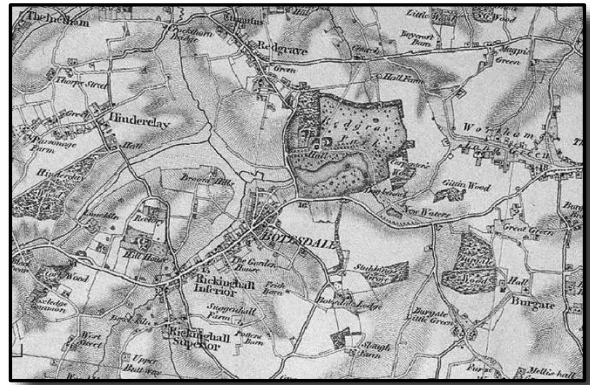
You will note that the chapel is semi-detached - its knapped flints being in stark contrast to the pink walls of the 'Chapel House' next door. This latter building was added to accommodate the schoolmaster and it was probably at this time that the buttresses were installed as mentioned above.

By the time that the grammar school closed in 1878 it had been very successful in sending a long line of pupils to Cambridge. The property was sold, Chapel House being purchased privately and the chapel itself being conveyed to trustees to be used for Church of England services as it is today.

The very-informative church guide book tells us "The old bell with the Bacon crest now rings out to call parishioners to worship as four hundred years ago it had called the cold and sleepy boys to school at 5 a.m."



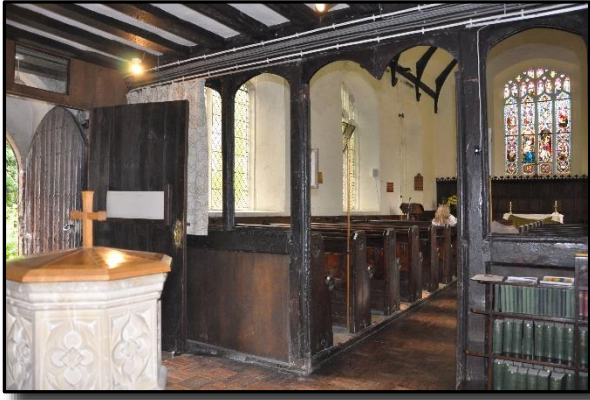
Over the centuries the old section of road where it all started, attracted more properties which stretched westwards and merged with the village of Rickinghall Inferior ('inferior' referring to the fact that the village is lower down in the valley than its Rickinghall Superior sister).



It is because of these various connections that this little Botesdale chapel can sometimes be found being erroneously referred to as *Rickinghall* or *Redgrave*.



The C19 font is positioned close to the front door.



There is no architectural difference between the nave and the chancel.



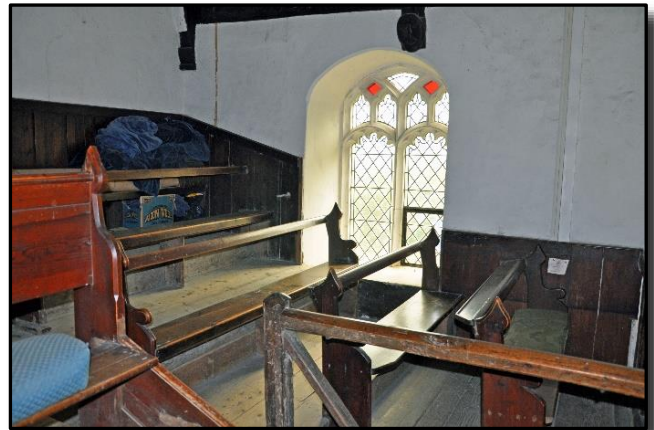
Zina sat reading the very comprehensive Church Guide Book while Jeff Lamb kindly showed me around the rest of the building.



There is further seating in the late C17 gallery which also houses the organ above which the rope descends from the 'Bacon Bell' . . .



. . . enabling the ringer to look through the doorway and witness the arrival of the fruits of his labours. At the left are the doors to the gallery.



The mention of galleries brings back a couple of happy memories. My home church was St Stephen's at Chatham. That also had a gallery which acted as a magnet to teenagers - whose enjoyment of the services and sermons was made evident by the occasional giggles that emanated from it . . . at least I *think* that was the reason for the giggles.

The other gallery was in the church at the village of Vinisce (population of about 900) in Croatia where I spent many happy sailing seasons. It was at the end of the Yugoslav war and the pressures of Communism had just been relieved allowing a return to Christianity. The new church was always full but the women and children sat in the nave while the 25 or so men occupied the gallery. Most of the former took Holy Communion while the latter never did. I asked the priest why this was. "Softly softly," was his reply, "We have got them back into church - that is the main thing."



This photograph was taken from the gallery and I would usually be making comments about the East Window here but more correctly I should call this one the *Northeast Window* since the Botesdale church points at 45° magnetic rather than at 90°. We discussed Church Angulations at length in Issue 47 (March 2017) of *The Botolphian* and reached the conclusion that there is no absolute requirement for all churches to point east and Botesdale has taken advantage of that.



The window, in its upper part, features an interesting series of eight players of mediaeval musical instruments.



The descent . . . not to a crypt but from the gallery back into the main body of the church.

Footnote(!): Regarding St Botolph's Shrine at Bury St Edmunds: The *Acta Sanctorum* of 1701 tells us that the ancient manuscripts in their collection record that St Botolph's relics were divided into three parts - his head went to Ely, his middle parts went to the king and the remainder (and Adulph) went to Thorney. No mention is made of relics going to Bury St Edmunds but there was undoubtedly a shrine to St Botolph there. This is yet another of the Botolph mysteries which we will address properly later.

Classification:

I have seen suggestions that the foundations of this church stretch back further than the story tells us but until further evidence comes to light we must assume that St Botolph himself had no hand in its origins and it must merit a 'D' classification.

Of course if the tree that hides the face of the church has one day to be removed and the extraction of its roots reveals Saxon stonework then we shall have to think again.

Thanks

My thanks to Jeff Lamb for delaying his bicycle ride while he came to show us round.

Readers' letters and emails.

1. **Peter Van Demark** wrote from Rockport USA saying that the newsletter brought back fond memories of his visit to Boston - his pictures at <https://peterhvandemark.smugmug.com/Travel/England2012/England-2012-August-22/>. Below is one of his pictures which started my quest into the question about the Morley St Botolph mark (see Editorial and 2 below).



Peter and I are looking forward to meeting each other when I visit in October.

2. Giles Clapp of The Worshipful Company of Masons (see Editorial) wrote in response to my query about Mason's Marks: "The picture looks rather complicated for a mason's mark which were much simpler and were often/usually only made up of 4-5 bold lines. Remember you would have had several jobbing masons working on a large project like a church under a Master Mason. The mason's mark was exclusively a vehicle for ensuring that the appropriate stonemason was paid for each piece of work he did by the Master Mason. So every single block, gargoyle, cornice, trace, lintel, doorstep etc etc in a church would have a mark somewhere on it. Down near ground level these would usually be on a face that wouldn't be seen by the public when the item was installed. In positions higher above ground level less care was taken to hide them as it wasn't planned that they would be seen."

It looks therefore as if Morley St Botolph's mark is a modern graffito.

3. John McConnell wrote a helpful email from Boston USA:

Denis - What a wonderfully enjoyable issue of *The Botolphian*! Thank you. For purposes of a little clarification, it is to be noted that William Brewster and the Plymouth colony of 1620 had nothing to do with the founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, later Boston. This second wave of English colonisation in Massachusetts was in part a commercial venture (as well as religious), carried out under the

auspices of John Endecott and John Winthrop, (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Winthrop)

First among the little villages of the Mass. Bay Colony was the "Citty upon a Hill," originally called Trimountaine (or Tremont --- the name of one of Boston's principal streets today) owing to the peninsula on which it was founded being geographically dominated by a 3-peaked hill, today known as Beacon Hill. Within a matter of months in 1630 it was renamed Boston. I hope you'll indulge my little insertion here! Cheers, John McConnell.

[Ed: Needless to say I wrote to John telling him that *The Botolphian* and I thrive on correspondence such as this - so 'keep 'em coming!']

4. Ray Theakston - a sailing friend who I have known for many years - wrote with general chit-chat amidst which he noted that he had viewed Boston's Stump from the Wash. [Ed: There is much talk about the tower's usefulness as a landmark but it is probably something that only pre-GPS sailors would really appreciate].

5. Gillian Machorton wrote a charming email in response to the Stowe Bedon feature: "I have to say how unobservant I am! I really hadn't noticed where all those figures are and had been pestering people as to their whereabouts. Shall now have to go and take a closer look - they should have been included in the history of course. Otherwise it was full of interest." [Ed: I really regard this sort of thing as *The Botolphian's* function - to look at a church with fresh eyes and hope to spot something that the locals have looked at without seeing. I am glad it worked this time].

6. David Gallimore wrote: "Firstly my thanks for yet another excellent *Botolphian*. Each and every edition has been of great interest to me as an ex Churchwarden with a love of old churches."

---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

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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.