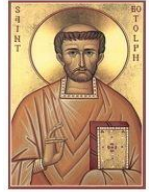




# The Botolphian

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: 72

1st April 2019

## Highlights this month

- **Church of St Botolph's, Billingsgate.**
- It gives me great pleasure to welcome the following new members: David Coble from Shepshed; David Wilkinson, Beverley Willis, Matthew Tottle, Jeff Hall, John Williams, Martin Lukehurst and John Fisher - all from Sittingbourne; Thomas Smith from Bristol, Tennessee, USA; Andrew Kelly from Ramsgate.
- Correspondence from **Richard Harbord** shedding light on the mystery of the location of St Botolph's Chapel at Tuttington; also from **Roger Cordey** at Morley St Botolph's.

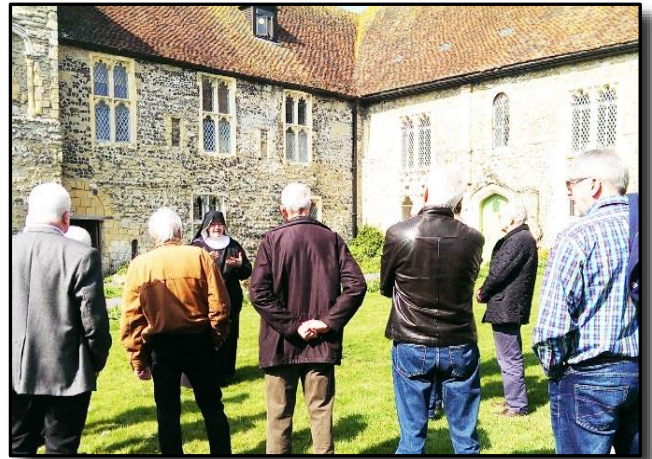
## Editorial

I received many emails wishing me well for the launch of *Botolph the Travelling Saint*. Many thanks for those and particular thanks to the kind people who joined me in Steep Street Coffee House on the day itself. The weather was not of the best and this no doubt put a few people off but there was a steady flow of visitors from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and I really enjoyed the day. I am pleased to say that sales continue to go well (see back page).

One section of the latest book covers events that were recorded in the C8 manuscript *Thar Halgan* - aka *The Kentish Royal Legend* aka *The Life of Saint Mildred*. Although Botolph is not mentioned in the legend itself, other historical documents show a direct link between him and Much Wenlock Abbey which was Mildred's family's other foundation.

As it turns out, this subject is in fashion at the moment as it also featured in the *Finding*

*Eanswythe* exhibition at Folkestone Library. Last Friday I was privileged to lead a visit of some friends to St Mildred's Priory at Minster on the Isle of Thanet where the prioress, Sister Nicola showed us round and gave us an inspiring and informative talk on the minster's history.



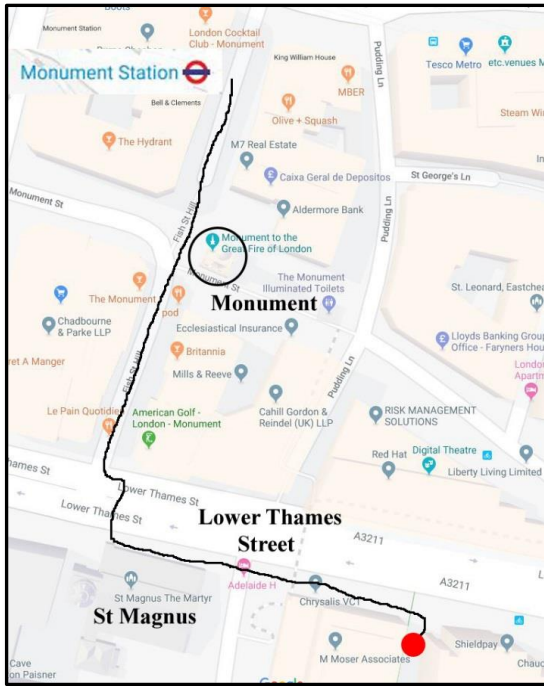
## Church Feature

### **B**illingsgate, London

**Approach:** *From Monument Underground Station: Take the exit subway that brings you out into Fish Street Hill close to the Monument itself. Walk down the hill, passing the Monument on your left until you reach Lower Thames Street where St Magnus' Church is straight ahead of you. Cross Lower Thames Street, turn to your left and pass under the pedestrian bridge and continue until you reach the next alleyway when you will have a wonderful view of the Shard on the other side of the River Thames.*

Take a few paces towards the Shard and you will be standing on the site of St Botolph's West Tower.

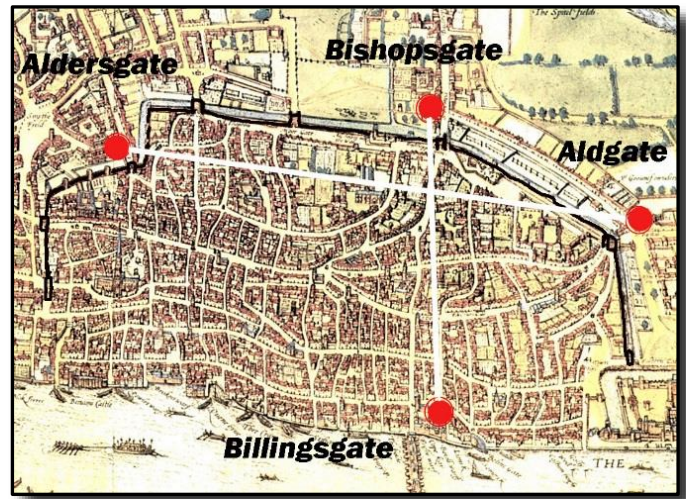
**Location:** Johnston Gray & Wardrop, 10, Lower Thames Street, London EC3R 6EN;  
**Lat/Long:** 51.509302, -0.085166.



Sadly you will not find the church itself because it was destroyed in the 1666 Great Fire of London and never re-built.



This is your view of the Shard through the alleyway and the outline of the church as it would have been.



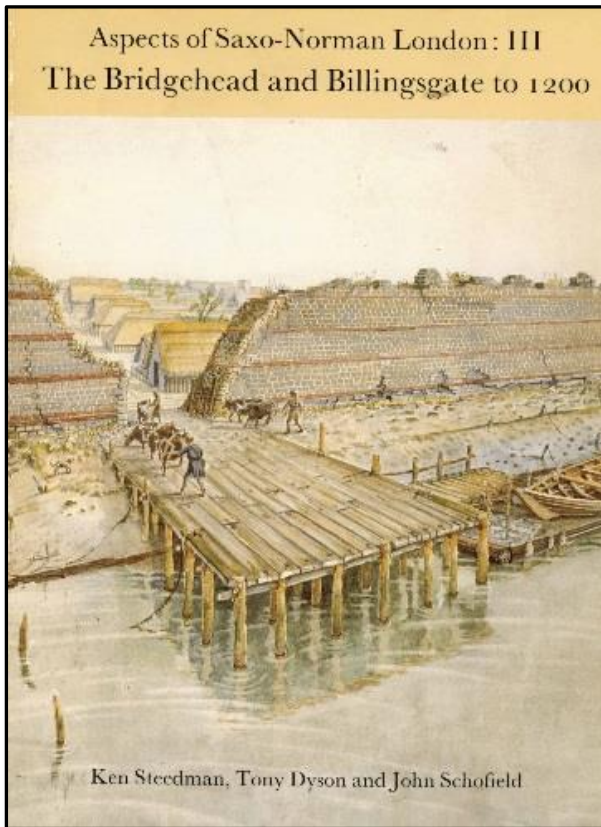
Its original existence as the southern marker of a limb of the 'cross' of St Botolph's churches which spanned London is important however.



If, when you came down Fish Street Hill, you had been able to continue straight across the road and past the west end of St Magnus Church and under its clock to the edge of the river, you would have been at the northern end of the position occupied by the Old London Bridge of 1209 - 1831. Today's bridge lies 50 metres west of the old one.

Much of the information that is available about this site comes from the work of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society of which the booklet shown below constitutes a fascinating 200 page report.



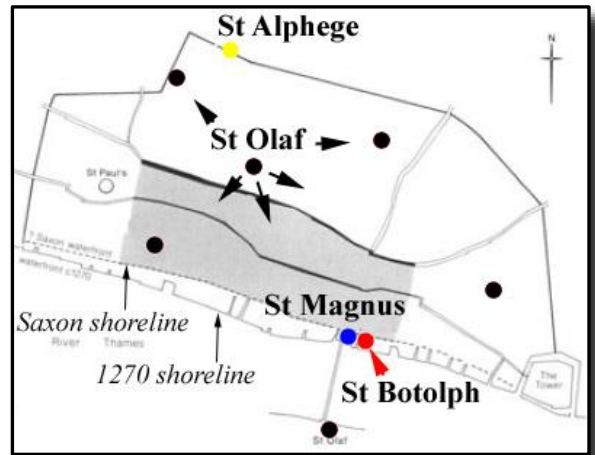


The front cover, by Martin Bentley, shows the late C10, early C11 jetty at the New Fresh Wharf with the breached Roman riverside wall behind. It well illustrates the sort of appearance we might have expected when the first post-Roman bridge was being built following a 600 year lull (c.400 - c.1000) during which there was no firm crossing over the Thames.

### The Devastated City

In *Botolph the Travelling Saint* I have done my best to illustrate the sort of desolation Botolph would have found when he visited old London in C7. At that time the City was an almost-deserted collection of ancient ruins which would have seen few visitors on account of the fact that it was not served by a bridge. Instead, a new settlement and trading area was developing further up-river at the Strand where, due to the free passage offered by a lack of bridges, ships could easily reach and find a berth.

It was 200 years after Botolph's death before the City started to have life breathed into it when King Alfred the Great, in 886, took the task in hand. It was a further one hundred years however before the first bridge of the new era was built.

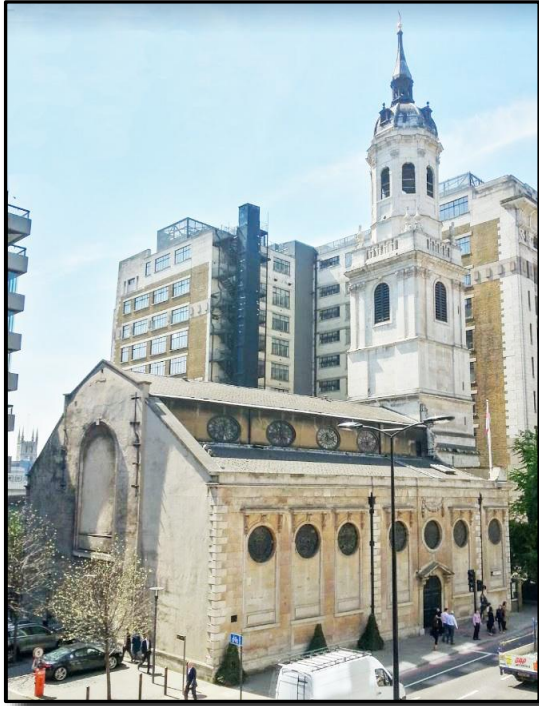


The shaded section above shows the extent of the City's repopulation in C10. The presence in England of Viking warriors both before and after Alfred's enterprise influenced the content of the new occupancy and in this picture black, yellow and blue dots mark the positions of churches with Danish connections.

### St Magnus

The church of St Magnus is one of these and it bears closer study, partly because it occupies a position between the St Botolph's site and London Bridge and partly because it was, for 600 years, the sentinel of the southern gateway to London. It is said that the Magnus to whom it is dedicated was the Earl of Orkney (the islands off the northeast corner of Scotland which stretch out towards the Shetlands which in turn stretch out towards a point which is only 200 miles from Bergen in Norway). The earl was martyred on the Orkney island of Egilsay in c.1116. In their *Mediaeval London*, Benham, W. and Welch, C. (London, 1901) tell us that *the Danes, on their second invasion . . . added ( to London) at least two churches with Danish names, Olaf and Magnus* and it begins to seem that we might have more churches of Danish origin in England than we have hitherto credited.

If you decide to pay homage to the site of St Botolph's Billingsgate you might find it worthwhile to visit the church of St Magnus which contains the same sort of accoutrements (such as sword rests etc) which are to be found at Aldersgate, Bishopsgate and Aldgate. One might almost say that St Magnus has added to its other duties that of being a partial substitute for its erstwhile companion church St Botolph.



Picture accredited to  
'Commuter Consultant' with thanks.

Like St Botolph's, the earlier church on the St Magnus site was one of the first to be destroyed in the 1666 Great Fire of London but, unlike St Botolph's, St Magnus' was rebuilt - under the direction of no less a personage than Sir Christopher Wren. It was one of his most expensive churches and was reopened in 1676. By 1709 a steeple and a hanging clock had been added. In 1782 the large windows on the north wall were blocked up to prevent the ingress of noise from the Fish Market. When Old London Bridge was demolished in 1823 and the new one opened 50 metres upstream, St Magnus' task of being the gatekeeper to London finally came to an end.

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Reverting to the *Botolph* family, you will remember that we dated the foundation of the Aldersgate church to before 1050 and the Aldgate church to before 1066. In the resurgence of London then, we would expect both the Bishopsgate and the Billingsgate foundations to be of similar dates to the other two. As we have seen, St Magnus died in c.1116 and was canonised in 1135. If the church really was dedicated to the *Orkney* St Magnus then it is unlikely to have been founded before 1150 in which case St Botolph's would have pre-dated it.

### St Botolph's Billingsgate

London Bridge was necessary for trade and this of course was the great catalyst which hastened the re-development of the City and stimulated its

appetite for churches. The first ventures were mainly British but soon became international and with this came the early vestiges of the proto-Hanseatic League which would, for the next 500 years, dominate and oppress trade in the two major St Botolph towns of Boston (Lincs) and London.

In a royal customs receipt dated 1200 we find the first mention of *Butuluesgat* (Botolphsgate) in its position at the head of London Bridge. This suggests that the wharf to which it refers probably dates from c.1150. It would certainly have taken its name from the nearby St Botolph's church. It seems unlikely that the church was built by the Normans since they were inclined to look unfavourably on British saints. Danish rule, on the other hand, was enthusiastic about our saints in general and St Botolph in particular and it would seem likely that they were the builders. The more I look at these London sites the more I see the involvement of the hand of King Cnut.

I have for a long time been working on the basis that the strong connection which exists between St Botolph and Scandinavia was a product of the C13 - C15 activities of the Hanseatic League. In this connection I have, for several weeks, been researching the Hansa expecting to discover that one of their many branches had adopted Botolph as their patron saint. This has not been the case - in fact to my surprise I have so far found no link between the Hansa and St Botolph. This leads me to suspect that the 'Scandinavian Connection' must have occurred much earlier and it too is pointing to Cnut's doorway.

### Relics

In the last half of C10 our country saw a lively Monastic Revival - led to a great extent by Aethelwold, Bishop of Winchester. It was during this period (in c.970) that our St Botolph's body was disinterred from Icanho in Suffolk with a view to his relics being enshrined in some of the new cathedrals that were being refounded. (In 787 the Second Council of Nicaea had decreed in that *every altar should contain a relic*. The decree had also inferred that this was already standard practice).

In c.1350 John of Tynemouth in his *Nova Legenda Angliae* wrote:

*"In a book of the Church of St. Botolph near Aldersgate in London, it is written that part of the body of St. Botolph (was brought there) through King Edward of glorious memory ..."*

Edward the Confessor ruled for twenty-four years from 1042 to 1066 so we can perhaps date the arrival of Botolph's bones at Aldersgate to c.1055.



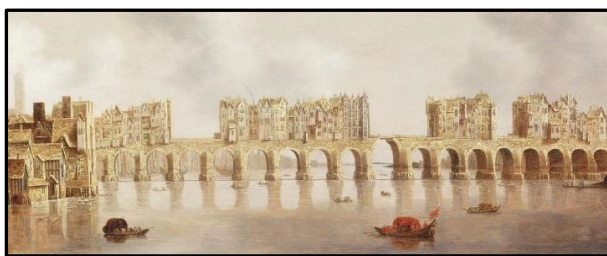
This ties in nicely with our original dates although we are still left with the conundrum of whether the Aldersgate and Aldgate churches were founded five or ten years earlier - by Edward . . . or twenty or thirty years earlier - by one of the Danes. Bearing in mind the strong connection between St Botolph and Scandinavia, I would argue in favour of a Dane being the founder of these churches and my guess would be Cnut rather than Harald Harefoot or Harthacnut.

### **The bridge and the wharves.**

These are integral to the existence of the church and it is to be noted that the wharf was named after Botolph rather than Magnus. This again suggests that St Botolph's was there first.



A detail from a picture of 1632 by Claude de Jongh shows The Tower in the background with two churches further forwards. One of these might be St Magnus' and the other is perhaps St Botolph's although close inspection reveals that some artistic licence has prevailed here.



On looking at de Jong's whole picture of the 1209 bridge one is able to grasp its massiveness. By 1328 it was already home to 138 shops and by the Tudor period this had increased to 200. Some of the buildings were seven stories high and overhung both the river and the road. When it was commissioned by Henry II in 1176 its design included a central chapel dedicated to St Thomas a Becket which was in use right up until the Reformation.



Looking across the bridge one can see the quayside . . .



. . . and arranged along the front are these 'cabins on stilts.' My first thought was that they were perhaps C17 cranes. Or perhaps they were drying towers? I would be grateful for information.

### **The Steelyard of the Hanseatic League.**

The home of the Hansa was on the far side of the bridge - a little further up-river - more or less where Cannon Street Station now stands.

When I started to write about Billingsgate I thought that the Hansa would be an important issue but I am now of the opinion that the League bears little relevance to the establishment and function of St Botolph's Church Billingsgate which was clearly well established before the Hansa found its feet. That said, it is worth noting that the organisation later became responsible for the maintenance of Bishopsgate, so we might run across them again when discussing this last one of the four churches.

These comments should not be taken as minimising the effect of this important German trading organisation which oppressed the ports of Lincolnshire and East Anglia in a parallel way to that which we have seen again in recent years. When things were working well they also of course brought massive benefits. I shall at a later date be writing an article which will discuss the effect the Hanseatic League had on trade in Boston Lincolnshire between C14 and C15.

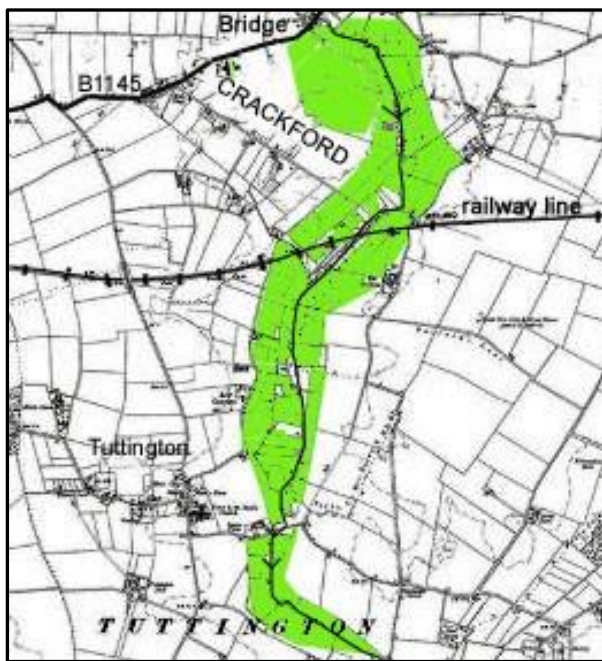
## Classification

I believe that St Botolph's Billingsgate was a Traveller's church founded between 800 and 1066 and should therefore be classified as B(ii).

## Correspondence

1. **Richard Harbord** of Gunton, Norfolk contacted me having read my convoluted mental wanderings in the June 2017 issue of *The Botolphian* as I endeavoured to work out the location of the historically-recorded-but-now-absent **Chapel of St Botolph at Tuttington**. I came up with a few tentative suggestions but Richard has now revealed that they were wide of the mark. As regular readers will know, I am always pleased to enter into constructive discussion and I am grateful that Richard has not only come up with a useful suggestion but has written it out in legible form:

### The lost church and village of Crackford, north-east Norfolk.



There has long been a local myth that a chapel dedicated to St Botolph was once located just north of Tuttington churchyard next to an ancient fair ground. This even led to a Yard in that area being dug up in the hope of finding ancient foundations. Nothing was found so what lay behind that myth? It seems to relate to a lost village and its church – Crackford. This lay on the road (the B1145) connecting the small market towns of Aylsham to the west and North Walsham to the east. The earliest tax records date to **991**, when it was listed with most of the other villages in the South Erpingham Hundred. Several of the neighbouring villages such as Colby and

Banningham were too small to be included in the list which emphasises that Crackford was of a reasonable size by then. Its exact location is unknown but that part of the name, 'ford' suggests that the main part of the settlement was focussed on the crossing over the Kings Beck. This is normally only a shallow but wide stream at that crossing and was easily forded. It is now spanned by Banningham Bridge though the group of houses surrounding it is called 'Colby Corner' as most of it is in that parish. There are or were nine facilities such as a water-mill (gone); large school; shop and pub (closed) etc; so it had almost become a village again by 1900. There undoubtedly was once a village church as well so is this where St Botolph's was located?

In the early to mid Anglo-Saxon period Churches in this part of Norfolk were usually planted along ancient track-ways a few miles apart. They became 'church trails'. Churches are also often found at cross-roads. Ancient south to north trackways led from the Norwich to the coast and one of them may have crossed the Aylsham to North Walsham highway. There have been so many changes to the local landscape, this crossing-point is difficult to identify. For example a railway line was built to connect the two towns in the 1880s and this cut off all but the road between Tuttington and Banningham, as shown on the map above. One other clue to the location of the lost church is that they were often planted near to a manor-house where the early patron was living, regardless of how far away it was from the village. Only a short distance west of Banningham Bridge is the 'Old Manor House' on the south side of the road so the church and burial yard could have been near there. That depends on the antiquity or otherwise of the name 'manor-house'.

In the **1086** 'Little Survey' made for William the Conqueror we see that Crackford (item 1.195) had its own area of jurisdiction with a village bailiff – the smaller villages adjacent to it did not have this privilege and had to rely on the bailiff of Aylsham or elsewhere. In **1066**, William I, took over the estate in Crackford that previously belonged to the Danish/ Anglian, Lord Girtyr. It was small with only 1 freeman, 3 small-holders and a population of about 24 people. They had 1 plough to cultivate 1 *carucate* of land (about 120 acres) which was valued with the royal manor of Aylsham. The Earl of Surrey (item 8.8) had another small part of Girtyr's estate which Thorold a freeman held with 10 acres and ½ a plough, valued at only 3s. The problem the village had was that the small area of land it cultivated was by the King's Beck and in the wide corridor of fen and wet meadow that stretched south to the



River Bure as shown above on the map [Ed: marked in green]. In 1797, William Faden published the earliest topographical map of Norfolk and it showed that this corridor of 'common waste' still existed. It is highly probably that the village was abandoned about 1200 when this land was no longer productive for cultivation. Much of the village moved west nearer to the manor-house and Mill Lane where later in history a tower-mill and chapel were built.

When parishes were first created and drawn up about that same date it was decided to split the land in and around Crackford between the adjacent villages which had continued to prosper while the latter declined – they were Banningham (north-west); Colby (north) and Tuttington to the south. The latter then became known in the records as the 'Tuttington-Crackford Manor' which extended north of the parish boundary and railway line. The manorial family of 'de Crackford' continued to own land and property there well into the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The name of the manor was still in use far into the 1800s. Even after its extension, Tuttington parish covers only about 830 acres and part of that came from Crackford so it was originally much smaller – as was Crackford itself. This enhancement of its size allowed Tuttington Church to be rebuilt and enlarged though it would have been still much smaller than the present building. In the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century a new round-tower was added with its belfry openings using Y-bar tracery typical of that date. 1½ miles to the north, Banningham Church was dedicated to St Botolph, that great East Anglian saint – was this inherited from Crackford Church?

Richard Harbord, Gunton, Norfolk.

*Thank you very much Richard.*

**2. Richard Cordey** wrote from Morley St Botolph in Norfolk:

*Morley St Botolph's Church has a lot going on this year. The restoration of the roof and drainage throughout the Church has now been completed after 20 months hard work and expenditure., We will also be celebrating the 60th anniversary of the fire in 1959 that all but destroyed the Church and took some 5 years to re-build.*

Thank you for that Richard and for your other kind words. We are constantly hearing of valiant work being carried out on old churches by tiny cores of people who are prepared to put themselves out because they believe in the importance of maintaining their local heritage. This really is another example of things which contribute to the 'Greatness' of our country.

#### REGULAR END-NOTES

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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.  
 (i) Founded by radiation from Botolph centres.  
 (ii) Founded along the course of Botolph's journeys.
- B: **Travellers' churches.**  
 (i) Founded before AD 800  
 (ii) Founded between 800 and 1066  
 (iii) Founded after the Norman Conquest.
- C: **Hanseatic churches** founded as a result of commercial enterprise.
- D: None of the above.

#### Typical Characteristics of Early St Botolph Churches.

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

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