

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: 88 2020 – the 1400th anniversary (circa) of St Botolph's birth 1st September 2020

Highlights this month

- Church of St Botolph's, Shenley, Hertfordshire – now a private residence.
- It gives me great pleasure to welcome Revd Edward Rochead as a new member. Edward lives in Eastleigh in Hampshire. but hails from Suffolk and is a friend of our president Father Tim L'Estrange.

Editorial

I hope that everybody is keeping well and Covidfree. Let us hope and pray that these difficult days will soon come to an end.

The church featured this month is the last of the extant churches and it is one that I have been looking forward to visiting for many years. Peter Buttle provided me with a wealth of material and I feel that in many ways I have only skimmed the surface of this amazingly interesting church. There is, I am sure, a lot more that the building can tell us and I feel that I should regard this feature as a 'First Edition' and that a 'Second Edition' will be due immediately.

In spite of having spent many hours researching the church I ran out of time before I could properly amass the references that I should have put in so I hope you will excuse me for that. If there is anything that you would particularly like a reference for then please ask. In the meantime I hope you all enjoy reading about Shenley.

Church Feature

Shenley, Herts.

Approach: When heading west and travelling anti-clockwise on the M25, pass Potters Bar and at Junction 22 use the second from left lane to take

the A1081 exit to St Albans. After 0.2 miles at the roundabout take the second exit onto Bell Lane, B556. After 0.2 miles at the roundabout continue straight to stay on Bell Lane. After 0.7 miles at the roundabout take the first exit onto Shenleybury on the B5378. After 0.5 miles the church is on your left.



Location: *St Botolph's Church, Shenleybury, Shenley,Radlett. 51.702852, 0.289656.*

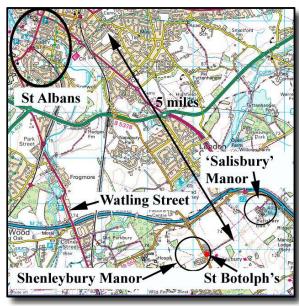
Key: This is a private residence and out of the kindness of his heart Peter has allowed me to take photographs and include this very important building on our list. It is not a functional church however and there is nothing to see that you cannot glean from the attached photographs so please do not intrude on Peter's privacy. If for any reason you wish to contact him then please do so through my telephone number or email. Thank you for your consideration in this respect. Listed Grade: II*

In some ways the area in which Shenley church lies is one of the most interesting we have featured because the surrounding countryside and its historical characters are inextricably entwined with at least one major event in England's history. I am thinking of the Wars of the Roses but the Peasants' Revolt should also be considered.

We start by looking at the Domesday record for Shenley – aka *Scenlai*, *Scenlei*, *Senlei*. It transpires that in 1086 the area accommodated 29 households (quite large) and was divided into three 'ownerships' or manors:

- The Abbey of St Albans
- Ranulf (whose tenant-in-chief was Robert, Count of Mortain) [Occupier of Shenleybury Manor].
- Geoffrey de Mandeville [Occupier of 'Salisbury Manor].

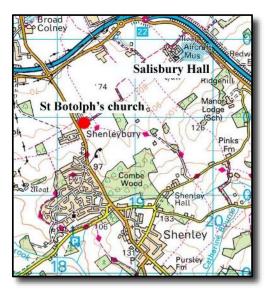
No church is mentioned as being present in 1086 and that may or may not be significant. If there were a church and it was owned by the abbey then it would not have concerned the king and would therefore not be recorded.



The picture above shows the centres of location of the three landowners. The exact site of Shenleybury Manor is not known but it is generally thought to lie within the indicated circle. The first point of debate that struck me was whether the church should be called *Shenleybury* or *Shenley* as both names can be traced back for hundreds of years. Ultimately, I decided on the latter since that it is the legal name of the parish today and the parish that the church was originally intended to serve.

St Botolph's lies one mile from the centre of Shenley village. This proved too far for some parishioners because in 1841 St Botolph's was side-lined when a chapel of ease was built in the centre of the village to save the parishioners having to trudge back and forth. In 1974 the church was declared redundant and the chapel of

ease, which is dedicated to St Martin, took over as parish church.



It was a matter of interest to me why St Botolph's should have been built at Shenleybury at all. Older churches are regularly found distanced from their main settlement. Amongst other things, this is often due to the fact that the medieval landowner chose to construct it close to his manor house for his own convenience and this is what seems to have happened here.

Hertfordshire Environmental Records writes:

A manor recorded in Domesday Book as 'Scenlai': A survey of the manor dated 1277-1291 records 452 acres of demesne land, 31 free tenants and 7 customary tenants. The exact location of the manorial centre is uncertain, but likely to be close to Shenleybury. The other manor of 'Shenley' became Salisbury Hall.

There are other indications that the manor was close by. Hertfordshire Environmental Records researched Shenleybury Villas which lie adjacent to St Botolph's and recorded that it lay on the site of a farmstead which 'presumably had medieval origins, at the manorial centre of the manor of Shenley and adjacent to the parish church'.



The red dot in the picture above shows the position of St Botolph's church on a local route running parallel to Watling Street. Shenley itself is seen in the brown area which marks the higher elevation whereas the church is on the slope that leads down to the crossing of the River Colne.



The entrance to St Botolph's church is via a short leafy drive.



The building has a twin-gabled roof — which I found unusual although I have subsequently found other churches with similar roofs. The outside shell of the building we see today was built in 1753 but since Peter Buttle purchased the property in 1984 a massive amount of internal work has been done.

Due to the Covid-19 outbreak, Peter and I had agreed that we would meet but maintain good social distancing and I would just view the outside of the building – which was my main interest, since the church's fixtures and fittings have long since been removed.

Peter explained that his residential accommodation has been constructed within the shell of the old church. He is a builder and is perhaps one of the few people who are ideally suited towards taking on such a project. It will

not have escaped your notice that his surname 'Buttle' is one of the forms to which the name 'Botolph' is often corrupted. It would almost seem as if our saint had chosen him for the job!



An extra bonus is Peter's interest in the history both of the church, the saint and the other churches which bear the St Botolph dedication. It was he who pioneered the journey along the path that I now tread. He started visiting St Botolph churches many years before I did and he was one of the first people I contacted when my interest was aroused. He has been a staunch member of the Society of Saint Botolph since its inception. His website is www.st-botolphs.com.

After his church was declared redundant in the 1970s there was a fair amount of indecision about the building's future before the diocese finally sold it to an Antony Moyes in 1980. Antony did the initial conversion but the project brought him little happiness and he sold it to Peter in 1984.

The surroundings are notable for the quantity of trees, many of them being yews and their presence is useful (you will note that I resisted the temptation to create a pun here) in more ways than one might expect. As well as providing an attractive setting and producing welcome oxygen they serve to delineate some of the historical boundaries of the building as we will see later.



I have not heard that there was a vogue for artistic *Symmetrism* in C18 but if there were then this church must surely be a good example of that. This is the west window and, unusually, it has an almost identical partner at the eastern end of the building. We will note the continuance of this principle of symmetry as we move around the property.



Above the window, Peter pointed out the date of 1753. I had difficulty in seeing it at first but if you look under the gable at the top left of this picture you will see the figure '1' and then you will then perhaps be able to trace the remaining three figures. The structure in the centre is the end of a gutter pipe which drains water that collects between the pitches of the roof. Unsurprisingly there is an identical one at the east end.



The dry-set knapped flintwork is really most impressive. The man-hours it must have taken to dress the flints (never, I am sure, the easiest of jobs at the best of times) is quite incredible. This high quality of workmanship continues right around the church.



This doorway, in the westernmost bay of the south wall was, from 1753, the main entrance to the church.



In the next to last bay (heading east) we find the priest's door with a sundial above. The buttresses are all faced with brick and they seem to have been built that way from their beginning. This serves two purposes: firstly it provides smoother and stronger edging than knapped flints could have done and secondly the redness provides areas of colour contrast in what would otherwise have been a visually boring grey flint wall.

I thought at first that a pink-brown sandstone had been cleverly sourced to provide a similar brick-like colour for the window frames and tracery but once I looked more closely, I concluded that these have been dressed subsequently with a colouring material. Whatever is the case the trouble has been taken and the effort pays off.

Since 1714 the property had been owned by Revd Peter Newcome who held the prestigious appointment of vicar to the parish church of Hackney from 1704 until his death in 1738. St Botolph's remained in his family until 1902 however. Peter's son Henry (d.1756) married Lydia Morland whose father Benjamin owned Hackney School which was comparatively insignificant until it was developed by Henry when it 'became the largest and most fashionable of all C18 private schools' and was known thereafter as Newcome's School. It closed in 1815. It seems likely that it was Henry who organised the rebuilding of St Botolph's in 1753.

Shelve All Saints R	71	Salop	Heref.	70	Robert B. More, E.
Shenfield St. Mary R	665	Essex	Lond.		Countess de Grey.
Shenington Holy Trinity R	433	Glouc.	Glouc.	321*	Earl of Jersey.
Shenley St. Mary R	484	Bucks.			Rev. P. Knapp.
Shenley St. Botolph R	1167	Herts.	Linc.	1244*	Rev. T. Newcome.
Shenstone St. John V	1827	Staffo.	L&C.	488*	John Peel, Esq.
Shephall St. Mary V	217	Herts.	Lond.	193	The Crown.
Shepperton St. Nicholas R	847	Middx.	Lond.	499*	S. H. Russell, Esq.
Shepreth All Saints V	345	Camb.	Ely	97	James Wortham, E
Shepscomb (in Painswick) PC	803	Glouc.	Glouc.	45*	Vicar of Painswick.
Shepton-Beauchamp St. Michael R		Somer.	B.&W.	373*	- Nash, & - C

You might have difficulty reading this portion of the Liber Ecclesiasticus list of churches in 1835 but it records that the rectorship of St Botolph's, Shenley was owned by a Revd T. Newcome. This refers to Thomas Newcome who died in 1851.



The 'Tempus Fugit' sundial is a nice touch but the perfectionist who had it placed was not going to be satisfied with it being fixed flat on the wall. He clearly calculated the exact angle required and lifted the slab off the wall at its eastern end to ensure that the sun gained maximum exposure. It apparently bears the date of 1741 but I could not find this.

The sundial man would of course have been helped if the building had been aligned exactly East-West. It is actually on the 80 degree line rather than 90 degrees. As we have said before, there could be a number of reasons for this, ranging from simple preference, to the plot being pegged out in *early* April or September rather than at the equinoxes themselves when the sun rises and sets due east and west.



Reverting to the topic of *symmetrism*, shown above is one of the eight simple but elegant C18 windows which grace the north and south walls – four on each side. Although they are identical, were placed at the same time and have not been renovated since 1753, they are in quite differing states depending, presumably, on the amount of weathering they have suffered.



And here is the particularly pleasing C18 rectilinear 4-light east window which *almost* matches its partner at the west end.



The difference (the only one that I can see) lies in the lionhead hood mould stops which are absent from the west window.



A small vestry was added to the north east corner. The remains of the base can be seen here and the flashing on the church wall shows where the roof line was. The doorway into the sanctuary has been enlarged recently . . .



... the previous smaller doorway is visible in the far corner of this c. 1900 picture (courtesy of Peter Buttle). The church looks much prettier inside than I would have imagined.

The poppyhead pew ends seen on the right indicate the position where the choir sat and the interior does appear quite light and airy. It was not to the liking of one commentator however who, in 1879 wrote tetchily:

"Appearance little better than a large barn . . . Very republic of a church, for nave and chancel are all in one, or, perhaps to speak more correctly, there is no chancel at all . . . Without exception, Shenley Church is the very worst in the whole County, while the parish is one of the richest."

I think that we can take it that he was not impressed.

Henry Newcome was used to London churches however and if this church was indeed based on his design it is perhaps not surprising that he wanted to open up the darkness and clutter that perhaps existed in the previous church.

At the time that he was considering rebuilding it was fashionable to build box-like churches with a shallow or railed-off chancel.

I have no knowledge of Henry's churches in Hackney but if we look at the St Botolph's churches that were being built in London at a similar time, we have:



Bishopsgate. built in 1725.



Aldgate, built in 1744.



Aldersgate, built 30 years after Shenley in 1788.

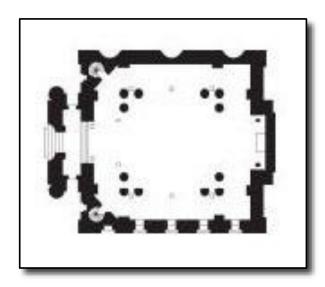
Admittedly these churches were grand enough to have their galleries which might have reduced the barn-like impression but I have some sympathy for Henry Newcome and his builder who were, I feel, doing their best to produce the contemporary concept of how a modern church should look.

A little further to the east of the church lies the tomb of Nicholaus Hawksmoor, the great London architect who died in 1736 at the age of 75. Hawksmoor was a protégé of Sir Christopher Wren and was a leading proponent of English Baroque. He lived and died in his house at Millbank, Westminster but had a country home at Porters Park in Shenley and in his will instructed

that he be buried in St Botolph's churchyard. The tomb is a 'listed building' in its own right.



We must wonder how much influence Hawksmoor had on the design of St Botolph's. The church is not English Baroque but it follows some Baroque principles. Here, for example is the groundplan of St Mary's Church, Woolnoth which was designed by Hawksmoor. It is more 'Mannerist' in style than 'Baroque' but gives us a clue as to where the church's barn-like structure might have come from.



I cannot imagine that Henry and Nicolaus had much time to chat and St Botolph's was not built until Hawksmoor had been dead for 17 years but I feel sure that he had a hand in it somewhere. The inscription on the great architect's tomb was cut by Andrews Jelfe – a mason who worked regularly on his buildings. It reads:

PMS

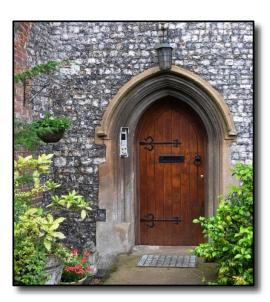
L Hic J[acet] NICHOLAUS HAWKSMOOR Armr ARCHITECTUS obijt vicesimo quin[t]o die [Martii] Anno Domini 1736

Aetatis 75

Whilst we are on the subject of tombs, the once churchyard but now private garden also contains a monument containing the ashes of the racing driver Graham Hill who was killed in an air crash near Elstree in 1975.



Here, Peter points out what could be a consecration cross on the north wall. One's first thought is that it could also just be where some of the flints have just fallen out - but consecration crosses were often made on the outside of buildings and with this type of flint construction, other than inscribing a cross on the stonework of the windows or doorways, no carving would be possible.



This circuit of the church brings us back to Peter's front door – the north door at the western end of

the church – the door which, during mediaeval baptisms, was traditionally left open so that devils driven out of the body of the baptised could easily escape.



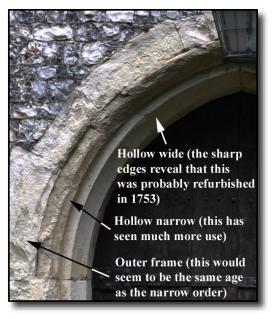




We have seen three doors and at first sight they all appear to be similar except for the fact that the south door looks as if it has had a harder life than the other two.



Closer comparison of the three reveals that the priest's door and the north door have three orders of mouldings (wide-narrow-wide as seen above) -



. . . whereas the south door has only two orders the first of which has clearly been replaced. Other

than that the doorways are very similar and it would appear that the builder has done his best to copy the style of the original doorway. I hope that by the time I have finished writing the next few pages I shall have been able to work out from whence this older doorway might have originated.

Pevsner tells us that this church represents a fragment of a larger building for which Maud, Countess of Salisbury, left money in 1424. Chancel and tower arch were pulled down after a fire in 1753. The wide nave was originally nave and south aisle.

There are records of many wills of C14 and C15 where bequests were left to maintain the fabric of this church . . . evidence that the church was extant a century before Maud left her bequest.

Small pieces of other evidence take us back even further but the trail goes dead in 1180 when the earliest mention of the church appears.

Looking at the Domesday record it seems likely however that 1180 was the date of a 'new-build' on the site and it was this church to which Maud bequeathed her money.



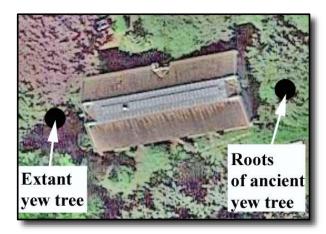
This picture comes courtesy of Peter¹ and shows a wooden bell-tower-cum-porch erected on the south side of the church – enclosing the south doorway. The same tetchy fellow who wrote scathingly of the church's interior commented:

"On the site formerly occupied by the south porch, is now a low tower of 'feather-edge' boarding, painted white, in every respect resembling the 'hoist' of a flour mill, for which I really mistook it, when I first saw it."

I understand his feelings because St Botolph's church at Ruxley in Kent has something similar.



When I first saw *this*, I felt the same as our tetchy friend but because the church had indeed been used as a barn for many years and because it is now a storehouse in a garden centre, I thought nothing of it. I still consider it is more likely to have had an industrial origin rather than an ecclesiastical one but in view of my 'Shenley experience' it seems it would bear further investigation.



Peter's property is blessed by many yew trees. There is a particularly large and splendid one at the west end of the church. "How long do you think that has been there?" asked Peter as he showed me around. I hazarded a guess at 600 years. While we were viewing Nicolaus Hawksmoor's tomb at the east end of the church, Peter said, "There are the roots of another one there."

Later, when I googled 'yew tree', I discovered that they last up to 3,000 years although 1,500 years might be more regular. When they get to 900 years of age they are classified as 'ancient' and their trunks begin to hollow out. The two that Peter mentioned are more or less where the black dots are in the picture above. This is important because it means that the church could not have extended further than those points for several hundreds of years.

¹ from the King George II topographical collection in the British Library. By John Connop.

Having had a good look at the outside of the church and delved a little into its idiosyncrasies, I would now like to take a look at the 'ancient history' of the site and surroundings. For this we must necessarily go back to the Domesday book and the three manorial 'owners'.

In 1086 **The Manor of Shenleybury** was held by Ranulf - a member of the Chenduit family.

One of Ranulf's descendants married a **Avelina de Somery** and in c. 1187, their son William Chenduit granted the manor to Richard FitzReiner sheriff of London.

In 1263 the property passed to Adam de Stratton, Chief Baron of the Exchequer. On 15 May 1268 he obtained the right to hold a market on Mondays and a fair on the vigil, feast, and morrow of St. Botolph – although in fact there is no record of a market or fair ever having been held.

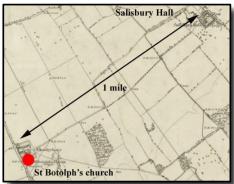
Stratton lost the property when it was confiscated by King Edward I after Stratton was convicted of forgery. It passed on to several other owners before in 1332 it was granted to John de Pulteney and remained in his family for the next three centuries.

In 1666 it was sold to Joshua Lomax and it took another two centuries before it moved on again when in 1850 it was bought by Joseph Myers of Porters Park.

The Manor of Shenley Hall (aka Salisbury Hall).



Above is Shenley (Salisbury) Hall on a map of 1866. As seen on the map below, it lies a mile from St Botolph's.





And a satellite view of the site today with the outlines of the original moat drawn in for comparison. Peter tells me however than a narrow moat does still exist.

The Manor of Shenley Hall (aka Salisbury Hall) was granted to Geoffrey de Mandeville by Duke William after the Norman conquest but it was held from an early date by the Somery family of neighbouring North Mimms. By the close of C12 it was in the hands of Roger de Somery and remained in the hands of that family until 1258 when it was conveyed to Walter de Meriden. It then passed through several ownerships before it was bought by Andrew Aubrey in 1351.

Aubrey was a merchant **pepperer** who served as Lord Mayor of London in 1339, 1340 and 1351. His son John married **Maud** (**aka Matilda**) **Francis** (**c.1360-c.1424**) - the daughter of Sir Adam Francis, another Lord Mayor of London who served from 1352-4.

Andrew Aubrey died in 1356 and title to the Shenley lands and manor were retained by his widow Joan. On or soon after her son's marriage Joan transferred the title to Maud who is in many ways the heroine of this story.

Sadly however Maud was unfortunate with husbands. John died in 1380 whereupon she married a Sir Alan Buxhull but he died a year later. In 1383 she finally made a more enduring marriage to Sir John Montagu (aka Montacute, Montague etc).

John Montagu (c1350-1400) was the 3rd Earl of Salisbury. He served in parliament as Baron Montagu and was a favourite of Richard II. He became Earl of Salisbury at the age of twenty one and in 1399 was accompanying Richard II on an expedition to Ireland when news reached them that Henry Bolingbroke had returned from France with a view to taking the throne. Richard II was captured; Bolingbroke became Henry IV and Montagu was thrown into the Tower of London.

On his release he unwisely became involved in an attempted coup and in consequence lost his head on 7 January 1400.

Poor Maud was a widow for the third time . . . and she was still only forty. The good news was that she still possessed the manor and lands of Shenley and her title of Countess of Salisbury. She also had three sons and a daughter. The eldest son, Thomas became the 4th Earl of Salisbury and provided Maud with a grand-daughter, Alice who married in about 1420.

Alice's husband was a nobleman called Richard Neville (1400-1460) and it was he who became the next (5th) Earl of Salisbury and Alice became Countess of Salisbury (Grandmother Maud having died four years earlier).

For more of this story the place to look is a book on the Wars of the Roses where you can read all about Richard Neville's triumphs and failures. Some major events in his bellicose life occurred at St Albans just up the road from St Botolph's church.

Two Shenley manors then. One right next door to the church and another a mile or so across the fields. The closest one must surely win so it would seem that the C12 builders of the first church on the site are likely to have been the Chenduit family of Shenleybury Manor.

Format of the early church

For the first fifty years after the conquest the Normans were too busy consolidating their position to think about building parish churches but from 1120 there was a flurry of such building work. St Botolph's first came to light in the records of 1180 and it seems likely that the church was a product of the aforementioned flurry.

It would probably have been a solid little church consisting of a short chancel and a nave. For various reasons I envisaged it having a central tower but it seems that this was not the case.

(i) Cusson, for example, tells us:

"It originally consisted of a chancel, nave, south aisle and tower."

I must concede that if it had had a central tower, he would surely have written *chancel*, *tower*, *nave* and south aisle.

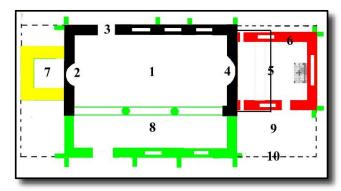
(ii) Regarding its demolition we read:

"A builder was engaged who demolished the tower and built up the west end."

This again suggests a western rather than central tower. The writer continues . . .

"He pulled down the chancel and tower arches and the arches which separated the nave from the aisle."

Here however, 'chancel and tower arches' are recorded almost in one breath as if they were adjacent – which would certainly have been the case with a central tower – but that is too little evidence to hang any weight on so I shall have to settle for a western tower.



In the absence of any further information – although one always hopes that this will come to light – my concept of the original church is as shown above and itemised below:

- 1. Nave built in C12.
- 2. Tower arch constructed C14.
- 3. North doorway C12.
- 4. Chancel arch C12.
- 5. Short chancel C12.
- 6. Chancel extended in C13.
- 7. West tower built C14.
- 8. South aisle constructed C15.
- 9. An extension for chapel or chantry or maybe there was a chapel at the east end of the south aisle.
- 10. The dotted area represents the outline of the building constructed in C18.

This conjecture is based on what I have found in other churches and the fact that, due to the presence of the yew trees, it would have been impossible for the church to have extended any further east or west.

And the provenance of the mystery south doorway? The original doorways would have had rounded Norman tops and have been very sturdy so this door must hail from a later date. I suspect it is C15 and was probably the original doorway to the south aisle. It would not therefore have moved very far.

It seems likely that Maud the Countess of Salisbury's bequest was used to finance the building of the south aisle and that the doorway is the only remaining evidence of her largesse. Perhaps it should have her name on it?

Classification

I see no evidence of there having been a Saxon church on this site. I think the first church was built by the lord of Shenleybury manor for the use of his people and as a symbol of his own status and strength.

It lies in an ideal position on an ancient trackway that ran from London via Barnet to St Albans and the north and would therefore have found a lot of use as a Travellers' Church.

This raises the conundrum that any church might be built for one purpose, as explained above, but subsequently used for a second purpose - as seems to be the case here.

For the moment however I would give it a C(iii) classification – a Travellers' Church built after the Norman conquest.

Thanks

My sincere thanks to Peter Buttle for all the help he has given me with this feature.

Correspondence

- 1. John Sennett wrote from St Botolph's Swyncombe. He is doing is best to do some in depth research on his church but, like the rest of us, is wondering where to look next. He writes: I'm still searching through G.O. Sayles, D.M. and F. M. Stenton books looking for more clues and wonder if you've discovered anyone apart from Rutherford Davis, John Blair and Helena Hamerow of Oxford in your searches who might be able to help me? Any suggestions would be welcomed by both John and me!
- 2. I was pleased to hear from **Heather Erguvanli** and **John Holmes**. Thank you for your kind comments.

REGULAR END-NOTES

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.
 - (i) Founded by radiation from Botolph centres.
 - (ii) Founded along the course of Botolph's journeys.
- B. Danish foundations: between 800 and 1066
- C: Travellers' churches.
 - (i) Founded before AD 800
 - (ii) Founded between 800 and 1066
 - (iii) Founded after the Norman Conquest.
- D: Hanseatic churches founded between 1150 and 1450 as a result of commercial enterprise.
- E: 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 within 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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