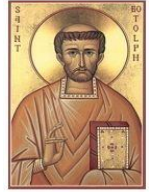




The Botolphian

Newsletter of
The Society of Saint Botolph

www.botolph.info



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Issue Number: 93 **Now published on the first of every even-numbered month.** 1st April 2021

Highlights this month

- **Buttsbury, Essex.**
- It gives me great pleasure to welcome the following new members: David Lawson from Folkestone; Andy Eagle from Scarning.
- Correspondence from Roger Joyce (Folkestone), Professor Barbara Yorke (Winchester), Father Pachomius (Brookline USA), Heather Erguvanli Bradenham, Ian Butson (British Sundial Society), John Sennett (Swyncombe), Andy Eagle (Scarning) and Neil Wright (Boston, Lincs).

Editorial

The extra time that I have gained by reducing the publication of *The Botolphian* to once every two months, has given me the chance to delve deeper into some of the more obscure references to St Botolph.

Volume I of my forthcoming *Voyages around Saint Botolph Churches* will cover the Home Counties: Sussex, Kent, London, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Essex. I have already prepared the work for most of the churches in these areas but, until recently, two sites remained elusive - namely Buttsbury and Theydon Bois - both in Essex.

Today we are dealing with the former and as it turns out, far from being insignificant, the Buttsbury research serves to **illuminate aspects of the way in which St Botolph's name has been used.** This offers a new approach which begs for a second look to be taken at dedications and connections which have previously either been accepted at face value or if a little puzzling have been deemed unworthy of further investigation.

Despite the rigours of lockdown I have recently had the pleasure of correspondence with several people who have an interest in our saint or in the structures which bear his name.

The first was Andy Eagle from Scarning in Norfolk where we know that there was once a St Botolph's church or chapel but until now its actual location has been elusive. Andy's research and interest has provided a much firmer idea of where the site might be and this will feature in a future *Botolphian*.

The second correspondent was Neil Wright from Boston, Lincolnshire who has written several books on the history of the town. Neil has recently developed some interesting ideas regarding the origins of the predecessor to the cathedral-like church we see today. I had originally contacted him about the nearby ancient (now land-locked) mediaeval port of Bicker and its relevance.

Before, during and after my correspondence with Neil, the time sequences of Boston church started to appear through a dense fen fog of historical mystery to the extent that I now feel that I understand them much better. Boston will also therefore be revisited in these pages in another issue, although, as you will see, it does also play a part in the Buttsbury research that follows here.

Feature

Buttsbury, Essex.

In Janet Cooper's: *The Church Dedications and Saints' Cults of Medieval Essex (Lancaster: Scotforth Books, 2011) ISBN 978-1-904-244-67-7*, she writes on page 67 of the churches which were in that county dedicated to St Botolph:

“In Essex between three and five churches (at Beauchamp Roding, Colchester and Hadstock, probably at Theydon Bois, and possibly also at Buttsbury) were dedicated to him . . . The parish name Buttsbury, recorded from 1219, means ‘Botolph’s pear tree’ and may refer to the saint. If there was a cult there, however, it was probably centred near the southern parish boundary, at or near the later Perry (pear) Street, rather than on the parish church.”



Fig. 1.

Location: The search was therefore on for another long lost church dedicated to Saint Botolph and it seemed that its location was probably close to the junction of Mountnessing Road and Perry Street in what is now the Buttsbury region of greater Billericay. Very approximate Lat/Long: 51.63327, 0.407763.

The site satisfied the usual parameters for an early St Botolph’s church - a Roman road running SW to NE two and a half miles away; a good supply of water (the River Wid lay within three quarters of a mile), and the location was halfway down an escarpment.

It was in December 2017 when I first started investigating the connection between Saint Botolph and the town of Buttsbury and I wrote about it briefly in the January 2018 issue of *The Botolphian*. Evidence was in short supply and I came to no satisfactory conclusion. Having

now researched all the other churches that are dedicated to our saint, 2021 brought the need to look rather more closely both at Buttsbury and at its neighbour Theydon Bois.

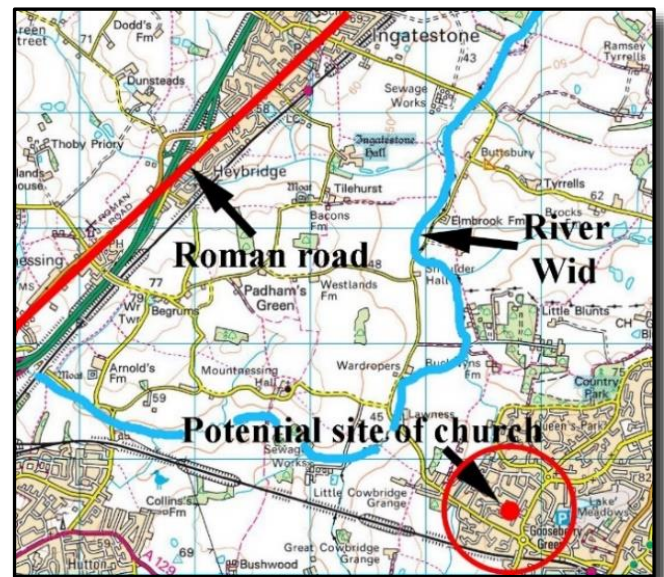


Fig. 2.

A Botolph’s Bridge and a Pear Tree.

Writing in the wake of the Covid-doomed Twelve Days of a Christmas that for many never came to fruition, the nostalgic words of the song returned to me as I wrote the title of this paragraph. I started by looking again at the village’s name. There was some question as to whether the name *Botolphsbury* or *Botolfvespirie* was the forerunner of *Buttsbury*. The former sounded more likely since calling a village after a pear tree seemed somewhat bizarre.

In 1086 the Tenant-in-Chief of the village and its land was one of William the Conqueror’s right hand men, Henry de Ferrers, although in those days *Buttsbury* would have meant nothing to him since it was then called *Cinga* - sometimes written *Ginge*.

At first sight this information seemed to add confusion but on closer scrutiny and reflection it proved to be major clue offering a ray of hope. The fact that **the village’s name changed during the comparatively short space of 133 years** between 1086 and 1219 (the first mention of *Botolfvespirie* in historical records) suggested that something fairly dramatic must have occurred in order to precipitate such an event.

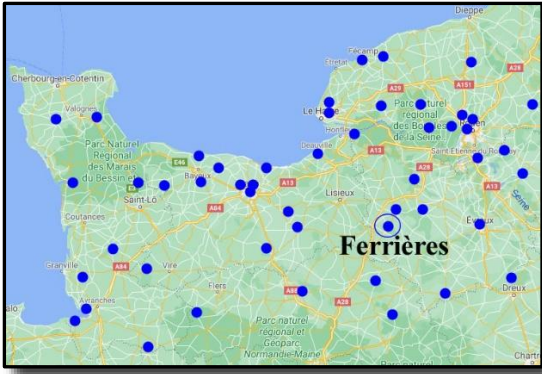


Fig. 3. Normandy abbeys

Henry de Ferrers (c.1035-c.1100) was descended from a wealthy Frankish family which took their name from ancestral lands at Ferrières-Saint-Hilaire in Normandy - that part of Francia strewn with abbeys many of which came to control manors in England (Fig.3).

Fortune favoured Henry to the extent that, as a senior administrator in the service of both The Conqueror and his successor William II he acquired the tenancy of vast tracts of land most of which were in Staffordshire, Derbyshire, Northamptonshire and Leicestershire (encircled in Fig. 4) - but there were also three outliers in distant Essex.

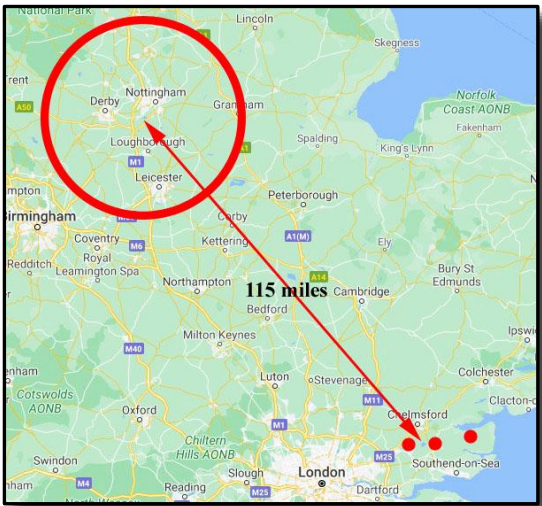


Fig. 4. The Essex outliers.

In c. 1080 he and his wife Bertha de l'Aigle (1040-c.1130) founded and richly endowed a Cluniac priory at Tutbury in Staffordshire where the castle became his main residence - so Essex was probably looked after by somebody else for much of the time. In 1086 he was one of the very commissioners of the invaluable Domesday Book in which we read his name and which records his extensive land-wealth of 210 manors.

I had read that when researching in this field an idea of the outlines of old manorial borders can sometimes be assessed by studying today's parish boundaries.

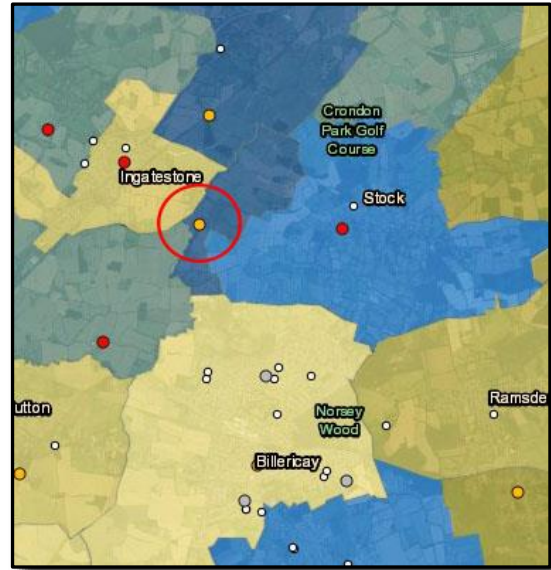


Fig. 5. Parish boundaries (Buttsbury encircled).

I was about to discover that information so gleaned is by no means infallible. Initially it appeared that the demesne of Henry de Ferrers' manor covered only the tiny section shown in darker blue at the Buttsbury circle shown in the parish map below.

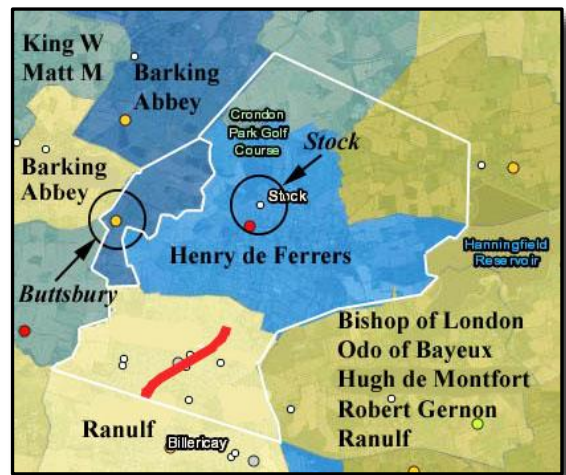


Fig. 6.

This made me wonder if Janet Cooper's positioning of the site of St Botolph's cult at the southern end of Perry Street (shown as a red line on the map) had been due to misinterpretation of the positions of Buttsbury's manorial and parish boundaries, since the location is well south of the boundary of Henry de Ferrers'

land. She is supported however by a survey of placenames by Nottingham University which writes that ‘Botolfvespirie’ *most probably referred originally to the district round Perry Street, about three-quarters of a mile south of Little Blunts.*¹

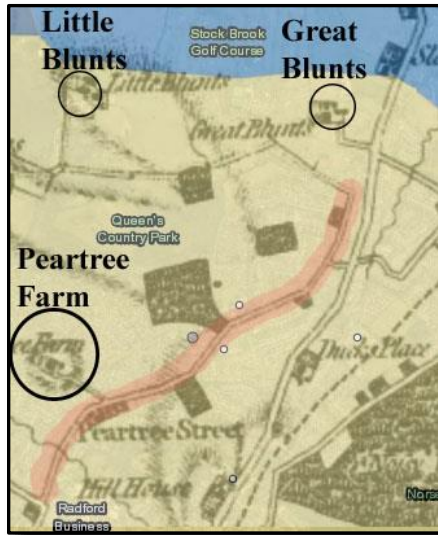


Fig. 7.

Little Blunts however lies in the modern parish of Billericay which places Peartree Farm well

outside the parish of Stock (the blue area shown on the map in Fig. 7.).

I found this a salutary warning that the use of the modern parish boundary in order to identify an ancient manorial boundary has to be treated with some caution. In this instance at least, the technique was unreliable and it seems most likely that the southernmost border of de Ferrers land followed the lowest white line shown in Fig. 6.

In regard to the east-west expanse, Ann Robey, in her thesis *The Village of Stock, Essex, 1550-1610: A Social and Economic Survey*,² confirmed that de Ferrers’ manor covered a substantial area and indicated that Stock had always been regarded as part of Buttsbury. It is not mentioned in the Domesday Book so in 1086 it would appear that Stock was either non-existent or insignificant.

It becomes apparent then that Henry de Ferrers was tenant-in-chief of the whole of the ‘apparently unoccupied’ swathe of land which extended from the east of that tenanted³ by Barking Abbey and perhaps stretched so far to the east that it abutted his land at Woodham (Ferrers) - as shown by the double-headed arrow below.

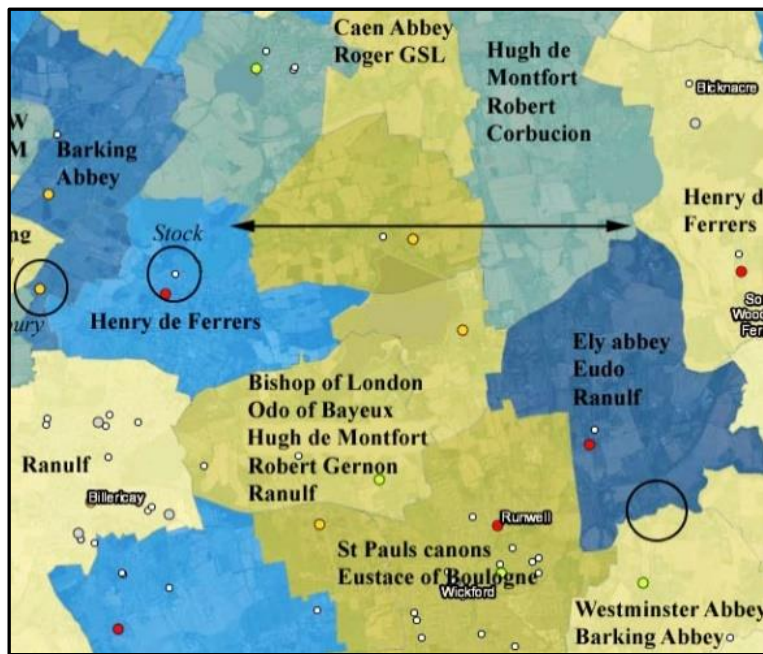


Fig. 8.

¹<https://epns.nottingham.ac.uk/browse/Essex/Buttsbury/532858eeb47fc40a98000db5-Buttsbury> (Accessed 12 March 2021).

² Robey, Ann Catherine. 1991. “The Village of Stock, Essex, 1550-1610: A Social and Economic

Survey.” Accessed February 8, 2021. <http://theses.lse.ac.uk/1108/1/U042918>.

³ We must remember that every piece of land in the country was actually *owned* by the *king* who could both give and take away from his tenants.

De Ferrers was a shrewd businessman who would have used his acumen wisely in the remote management of his Essex holdings - marked in grey in the picture below. Here, in 1086, he owned or held sway over 400 sheep, 140 pigs and 35 goats together with a large amount of wood and arable land.

One quarter of the sheep and pigs were at Buttsbury and the rest at Woodham (Ferrers).⁴ His third, and rather smaller estate, was eighteen miles east of Buttsbury in the village of Steeple on the Dengie peninsula where it bordered the River Blackwater.



Fig. 9.

His holding at Woodham (Ferrers) bordered another river - the Crouch, which was much closer to Buttsbury - just nine miles away in fact. Both landing places would have been valuable sources of income since they afforded the owner the opportunity of charging tolls on goods being landed or embarked. The importance of these findings is that they vastly increase the size of the area in which the foundations of an errant St Botolph's church might be found. Despite extensive searches however, I was unable to come up with a likely spot. I decided to have a closer look at the existing church of St Mary's Buttsbury in the hope that it would yield some clues.

attached to a chancel which is of the same length if not longer. The capacity of its nave has been doubled by adding a north and south aisle.



Fig. 10. St Mary's church, Buttsbury.

St Mary's is a strange little church in terms of its ground plan. It has a very short nave

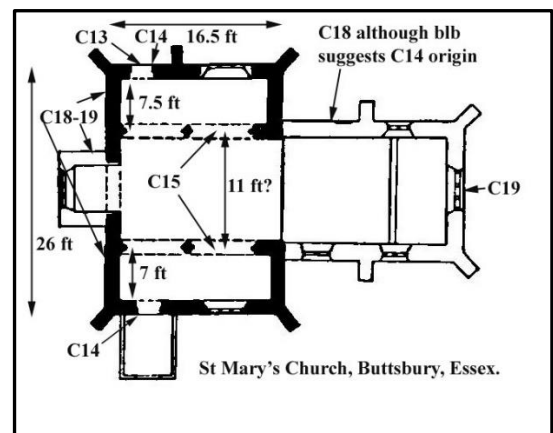


Fig. 11. Groundplan of St Mary's.

The church's main claim to fame in terms of antiquity is that the wooden north door has 'wide battens and ornamental hinges and straps dated by Pevsner to C11 with additions of

⁴ At the time of Domesday the land was known as Woodham but was later called Woodham Ferrers in honour of Henry. Since we are spanning two

periods I follow Open Domesday's lead in including the second part of the name in brackets.

C12'.⁵ In Pevsner and Radcliffe's 1979 edition however the reference reads: 'C13, some later'. Historic England goes on to say: *The church may have Anglo-Saxon origins... (it) was held by the nuns of St Leonard's Barking and was sufficiently important, despite its small size, to have a very large parish with at least one dependent chapel at Stock (All Saints).*

I had been hoping to discover that St Mary's had originally been dedicated to St Botolph and then, following the strictures of the Reformation, had been forced to pass through a saint-less period as plain *Buttsbury Church*, before becoming rededicated (perhaps in 1787 when other re-vitalising changes to the church are recorded) - this time to St Mary.

I was looking for the church being the product of a high-medieval manor; indeed nearby Buttsbury Hall Farm attracted my attention on this basis.

Ann Robey's research revealed that by C16 the small area between Buttsbury and Stock hosted *seven* manors - but Buttsbury Hall was not listed amongst them. There was another manor - Ingatestone - which was further to the west but this was part of another parish.

In the absence of any further clues about St Mary's, which eventually became the property of the nuns of Barking, it seemed that I was looking up the wrong tree.

Recapitulation:

Sometime in the short period between 1086 and 1219 the village changed its name from *Cinga...* to *Botolfvespirie*.

Botolph's Peartree.

It was beginning to appear that the population of Buttsbury (or its lord) had indeed, against all probabilities, chosen to link the name of a saint to one of its pear trees. A suggestion from local folklore credits the tree with being one under which St Botolph had preached in C7 but the discrepancy of 500 years between the act and the C12 renaming must surely preclude this.

⁵ Historic England at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1264434> accessed 8th February 2021.

The connection would seem to be 'sheep'.

St Botolph's Day, 17th June, had been of major importance to sheep farmers since well before 1125 when the first recorded major annual fair at Skirbeck in Lincolnshire took place. It drew people from far and wide and lasted for several months.⁶ The fairs eventually gathered such momentum that the *name of Skirbeck* ultimately became eclipsed by *the name of the churchyard* in which the fair took place - and the locality became known as *Botolph's Town* and pronounced 'Bo'sto'n'.



Fig. 12.

Within a few years Boston had risen to be one of the five premier English ports for the exportation of fleeces.

In *Cinga*, as in Skirbeck, the importance of sheep farming had been in the ascendant for many decades before it was marked by the change of name.

Painting the sheep scene.

In 1086 Henry de Ferrers would have been in the happy position of being able to ship his fleeces directly from his own quaysides at Steeple on the Blackwater, or from one of his creeks on the River Crouch. If he was lucky, traders from the Low Countries or Scandinavia

⁶ C.T. Clay ed., *Early Yorkshire Charters*, iv, pt i, The Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series, Extra Series i (1935), no. 8.

might have come directly to him, but news travelled slowly in C11 and it is more likely that the fleeces would have been transported northwards to one of the great (but still in early development at this time) trading centres at Boston, Lincoln or Hull where de Ferrers could be sure of a sale at a good price.

He would not have been alone in this. One of his neighbours, Swein, had vast holdings in Essex where he was farming over 6,000 sheep. One of these holdings was at nearby Theydon Bois where, you will remember, there was another link to St Botolph. The abbeys of Barking, Caen, Ely and Canterbury, the bishops of London and Bayeux - all kept sheep in Essex and de Ferrers' riverside lands would have yielded a nice income when used by these others for shipping their fleeces or sheep.

Battlesbridge

De Ferrers' land was on the northern bank of the River Crouch but there were also competing landowners and embarkation sites on the south bank. To the east there was a crossing point known today as Battlesbridge. The picture below dates from 1777. It has long been thought that the origin of its name is from the *Bataille* family who are said to have maintained the bridge.



Fig. 13. Battlesbridge 1777.

There is no historical record of this however and the loyalties and interests of the Batailles are far more likely to have rested closer to their family seat 25 miles away to the northwest.

A more likely toponymy is that the name is a corruption of *Botolphsbridge* and if this conjecture is true, Battlesbridge would join

several other *Botolph Bridges* which started this way before having the first part of their names corrupted to *Butters*, *Butlers* and suchlike before reverting.

Battlesbridge is typical of the others in that it shows no signs of being connected with any St Botolph's church past or present. Another example of such a bridge lies at the edge of the sheep farming district of Romney Marsh where the derivation of its name has frustrated local historians for centuries.



Fig. 14. Botolph's Bridge, Romney Marsh shown on a map dated 1855.



Fig. 15. Botolph's Bridge, Romney Marsh shown on a map of 1877.

In the course of looking for a **church** we have so far collected - not a *partridge* and a *pear tree* but a potential *botolphsbridge* and a *pear tree*.

At this point I reached the conclusion that there never was a St Botolph's cult or a St Botolph's church in Buttsbury.

To my surprise, there seemed to be little doubt that **there was however a very special pear tree.**

Summary

There are plenty of references associating St Botolph with Buttsbury. We have discovered that Buttsbury in C11 was much more significant and covered a much wider area than previously thought. It was the property of one of the richest and most powerful men in the country.

We now have to ask, therefore, what might be the Botolphian Connection?

And the answer, I believe is 'sheep'. Although the evidence is circumstantial I believe that in C12 on 17th June each year, it was probably under Cinga's Pear Tree that farmers and traders gathered to buy and sell their sheep.

They would have chosen the pear tree - partly because of the shade that it and its neighbouring pear trees offered, and more importantly because everybody *knew where it was.*

Cinga was not lucky enough to have a well-known bridge around which drovers could gather but they were obviously proficient at growing pears. And in the same way that apples are fermented to make cider, pears are fermented to make perry and traders could make merry on the perry and on the other alcoholic beverages that would have been available.

If I am correct then this has implications for those other Botolph Bridges which do not take their name from a nearby St Botolph's church since, by extension, these were probably also sheep and fleece trading points. Each one would have been a well-known and easily identifiable site - and, perhaps more importantly for the traders, there would have been a hostelry nearby.

It looks as if the change of Cinga's name to **Botolph's Pear Tree** might have been prompted by a desire to advertise the village as a premier sheep trading post and in those days the significance of the name would have been understood by all who mattered.

If we look again at the 1219 date we can see that this was indeed a time of change:

- The Magna Carta was three years old.
- King John had died and a nine year old boy had been crowned Henry III.

Unbeknown to those who lived in the locality of Botolph's Pear Tree was the fact that the

sheep trade was entering an upward spiral which, over the next 150 years, would bring unimaginable profits and affluence.

In the circumstances and in the light of what happened later, the Cingas were right on the button with their timing ... and their choice of a new name.

Correspondence

1. Over the past two months I have received many chatty emails telling me what is going on in various churches during lockdown - and others asking me what happened to the 1st March *Botolphian*. I took this as an encouraging indication that many readers eagerly go straight to the nub of the newsletter rather than reading the notices at the front. I subsequently received several "Whoops - I hadn't read that you have changed them to two-monthly issues now," emails.

2. **Roger Joyce (Folkestone)** solved the solution of the name of the roof truss at Bradenham. It is apparently called a *Scissor Truss*. Roger referenced his source as <https://twitter.com/SPAB1877/status/1283473516004810755/photo/1>

which introduced me to *The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings* - Britain's oldest heritage charity founded by William Morris in 1877 - thank you Roger.

3. **Professor Barbara Yorke** wrote from Winchester, kindly saying how much she enjoyed receiving *The Botolphian*, and throwing further light on the background of Aethelmund - as referred to in the last issue where he featured in one of the stained glass windows of St Botolph's church Bradenham. Professor Yorke wrote: *Aethelmund is the East Anglian king who, according to Folcard's Life of Botolph, and the brother of the East Anglian princesses he met in Francia. He does not appear in any other source, but is said to have been ruling at the same time as Aethelhere and Aethelwold who are attested in reliable sources. Whatever the truth of Folcard's account I think it explains the stained glass window of Aethelmund.* Many thanks for that, Professor Yorke.

4. **Father Pachomius**, Brookline, Massachusetts remarked on the 'gorgeously enviable yews' in my photographs of Bradenham. These were the same yews that I complained had prevented me from getting decent shots of

the south wall of the church. The words Beauty; Beholder; Clouds; Silver-linings, come to mind. On reflection however ... yes they are beautiful trees and, as we discovered at Shenley, they sometimes, due to their longevity, provide us with useful information about which parts of a churchyard could not have supported an ancient building.

5. Heather Erguvanli (Bradenham) is part of a group working on a Church Recording project for Bradenham. We have exchanged several emails over the last couple of months, one of which featured a question about whether or not it was at one stage customary to have two wall-brackets (or corbels) one on each side of the altar and each supporting a figurine.

My first thought was that the people portrayed might be the Virgin Mary on the north side and St John the Evangelist on the south - similar to their positions on a rood beam but I found no evidence for this. Heather asked because at Bradenham they do have such a statuette on the north wall and wondered if there might have been another one to the south.

Heather and I would be pleased to hear from anybody with knowledge on this subject.

6. Ian Butson of the British Sundial Society wrote concerning the mass dials at St Botolph's church, Ratcliffe-on-the-Wreake. The dials on this church are (unusually) on a windowsill rather than on a door jamb. In these days of lockdown and the consequent problem of visiting, Ian was looking for a confirmatory photograph, which I was pleased to be able to provide.

7. John Sennett (Swyncombe, Oxfordshire) has, during lockdown, been working hard on his book: *The earliest known history of St Botolph's Church, Swyncombe (and a little wishful thinking)* and he tells me that he is now pretty close to publication. Good luck with that John.

I wish you all well with getting your immunisations and returning to some semblance of normality and the simple pleasures which we previously took for granted but will now relish.

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: -

The list of classifications I use has been subject to constant revision over the past six years. The current version, revised December 2020, is as follows:

1. A church on a site which might have been founded directly by St Botolph during his life or by his acolytes soon after his death.
2. A church the original of which is thought to have been the product of Danish landowners (c.878-890, c.1016-1035).
3. A church originating from and as a result of Monastic Revival (c. 950 - 1016).
4. A church which, even if it had a humble predecessor on the same site, mainly blossomed as a result of opulence gained from the wool trade (c. 1150-1450).
5. A church lying on or close to one of the major ancient trackways, Roman roads or city gates, the proximity of which merits the suspicion that a major aspect of the function of the church has for a long while been closely linked with long-distance travel.
6. A church lying on or close to a pilgrimage route. For the moment until a pattern becomes clear, this classification has been sub-divided in the following way:
 - a. Churches founded for this purpose before A.D. 800.
 - b. Churches similarly founded but between the years A.D. 800 to 1066.
 - c. Churches founded after the Norman conquest.

Typical Characteristics of early St Botolph Churches.

1. Nearly all are in the eastern half of England
2. Most have Saxon foundations.
3. Many lie within 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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