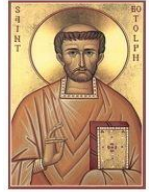




The Botolphian

Newsletter of
The Society of Saint Botolph

www.botolph.info



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Highlights this month

- Church of Theydon Bois, Essex.
- *Scarning and the Mystery of Spoonbridge* by Andy Eagle.
- Correspondence from John Sennett, Rosemary Hammick, Heather Erguvanli, Nick Molyneux, Father Robert Godding and Jane Hogg.

Editorial

I have been making *some* extra progress with research and writing as a result of the extra time gained by publishing *The Botolphian* bi-monthly - although the time does seem to slip away faster than I would wish. I am looking forward to the arrival of the time when I am able to start re-visiting those Saint Botolph churches which need an update.

In seventeen days it will be St Botolph's Day, but sadly it looks as if it will have to be a low-key affair once again. Let us hope that by next year we will be back to normal.

Zina and I have been marshalling at our local Folca Vaccination Centre and have seen at first hand how hard everybody is working towards getting the country into a fully immunised condition. I must say that after a four hour shift I usually feel rather more exhausted than I think I should be - bearing in mind that all I am doing is shepherding people into the next available jabbing chair!

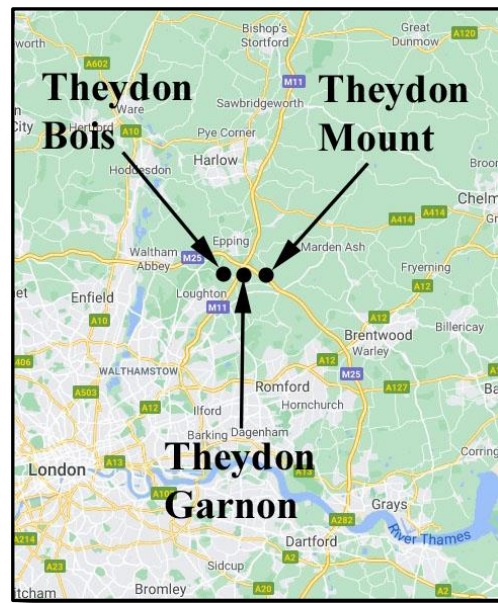
As Captain Tom said: "Tomorrow will be a good day".

My best wishes to you all for a very happy and healthy June and July.

Church Feature

T heydon Bois, Essex.

The Theydon villages, of which there are three, Theydon Bois, Theydon Garnon and Theydon Mount, border onto the River Roding just 15 miles northeast of London.



Theydon Mount is so called because it sits on a hill and the other two are named after former lords of the manors. In the Domesday Book, Garnon and Mount were referred to respectively as *Taindena* and *Teidana*. One can see that potential confusion would have demanded a change of name. 'Theydon' comes from Old English and means 'the valley where the thatch grows'.



The location of the ‘Saint Botolph connection’ that we are examining in this issue lies a mile and a quarter southeast of the main village ...

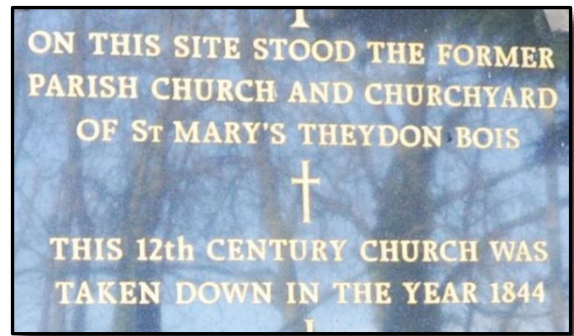


... on the road to Abridge where, as you might expect, there is ‘a bridge’.

When we visited there had been plenty of rain and the river was in full spate occupying the sort of area that it would have covered back in Saint Botolph’s day.



Further back towards Theydon Bois (pronounced ‘Boys’ or ‘Boyce’) we find a memorial marking the site in question.



And yet, as you see, the church is definitively labelled as ‘St Mary’s’.



As we have been discovering, there are five localities in Essex which are relevant to our saint and Theydon Bois marks the most westerly of the southwest cluster of sites.



Location: On the B172 Abridge Road close to Theydon Hall Lodge - Epping CM16 7NR; Lat/Long: 51.661188, 0.114128.

There are several historical references to a St Botolph's church at Theydon Bois - one of which can be found in the fourth volume of the History of the County of Essex,¹ which tells us: "*The old parish church of St Mary, which may earlier have been dedicated to St Botolph... stood next to Theydon Hall ...*"

We are obliged to ask, "What does that mean and who said so?" and, before starting our research, we might ruminate on which periods the 'earlier' might be. C7, C10 and C12-C14 would seem to be the most likely.. If C7 then the link would have been directly to St Botolph himself or to his acolytes; if C10 we are looking at the monastic revival; if C12-C14 then it is likely that the dedication would have been relevant to the wool trade.

Our next question must be, "When was the church finally re-dedicated to St Mary?"

In her book 'The Church Dedications and Saints' Cults of Medieval Essex,' Janet Cooper tells us that, '*in the fifteenth century the*

*churches of Theydon Garnon and Theydon Bois were both dedicated to All Saints, but Theydon Bois may earlier have been St Botolph's.*² She bases these comments on the fact that in the '*Feet of Fines for Essex and Place Names*'³ (stored in the Essex Record Office) we can read that in 1456 Theydon Bois was referred to as *Theydon Bois Sancti Bothulfi*.

She later writes that in 1485 the church was dedicated to All Saints and by 1768 it had changed its affiliation to St Mary.⁴

Her book was in 2012 reviewed in *The Local Historian*⁵ by Professor Nicholas Orme (University of Exeter) where he wrote: "She states that changes in dedications took place *between* the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, whereas in fact they changed **in the eighteenth**, when the antiquaries produced new conjectures."

It seems to me that this is an important concept and in the case of Theydon Bois, Orme's suggested pattern was found to be proved.

As Janet Cooper shows in her list of dedications *St Mary the Virgin* was the most popular cult in Essex with a total of 119 dedications; *All Saints* came second with 66. St Botolph was thirteenth with four active dedications (Eastwick, Beauchamp Roding, Hadstock and Colchester). During its life the little church at Theydon Bois therefore managed to embrace not only St Botolph but also the two most popular saints in Essex.

Janet Cooper further notes⁶ '*In England as a whole, many churches dedicated to St Botolph stood near gates or bridges, and by the eleventh century he seems to have been a patron saint of boundaries*'. In support of this she cites the Hadstock church which stands on the Suffolk-Cambridgeshire border. Dr Graham Jones⁷ has in the past expressed similar views (see below). So it seems that the village's medieval Saint Botolph dedication is likely to have persisted until about 1470 when it was changed to All Saints. It is noteworthy that the period of our saint's incumbency comes to an end quite precisely when the prosperity of Essex's wool trade, having peaked, was declining.

¹ History of the County of Essex Volume 4, Ongar Hundred pp 255-267. (Originally published by Victoria County History in London in 1956).

² Cooper, J., 2011. *The Church Dedications and Saints' Cults of Medieval Essex*. Lancaster: Scotforth Books. p. 40.

³ Feet of Fines Essex iv, 50. PN Essex 82-83.

⁴ Janet Cooper p.167.

⁵ (Accessed online September 2012)

⁶ Janet Cooper p.67

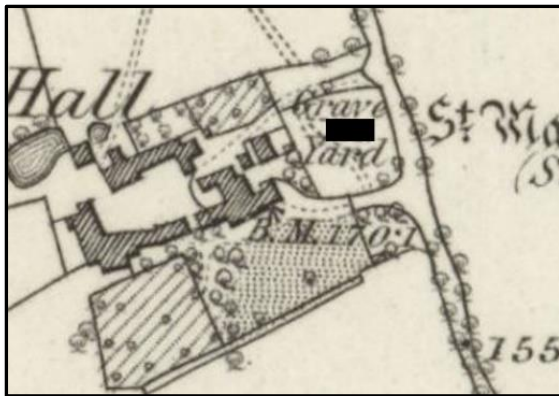
⁷ Dr Graham Jones, FSA FRHistS FRGS, Oxford University School of Geography and the Environment. Author of *Saints in the Landscape*.

Perhaps in 1470 all was fair in love and dedications and medieval parishioners were disinclined to show mercy. Saint Botolph had served them well throughout the wool bonanza but now that it had turned sour it was time for Saint Botolph to be summarily ditched in favour of All Saints.

This was also however the time during which the seeds of the Age of Enlightenment (which reached its zenith in C18) were being sown. In the bigger world there were early rumblings of Protestantism and discontent which came to a head only 47 years later when, in 1517, Martin Luther published his *Ninety-five Theses*. Perhaps the Theydon Bois parishioners read the mood of the times and decided that it was time for Saint Botolph to jump before he had to be pushed and so replaced him with the less controversial dedication of All Saints and thereby joined the populism being shown by the rest of the county.

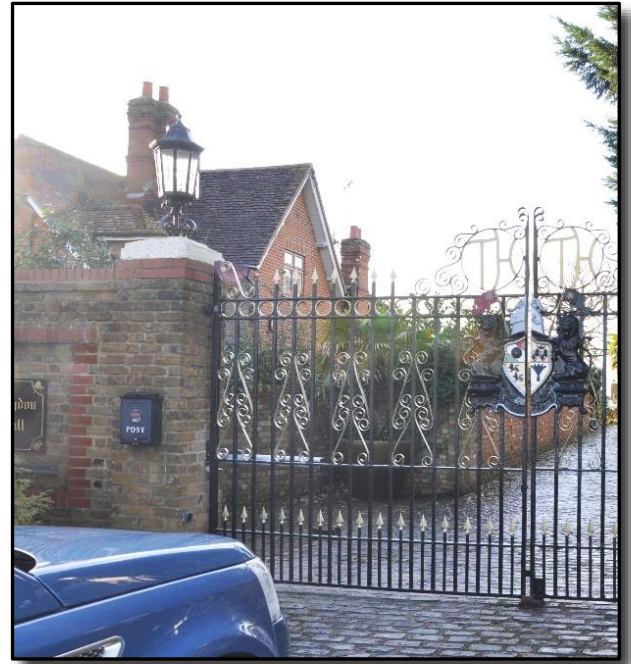
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We will return to the choice of Saint Botolph's successor later but for the moment let us investigate the hypothesis that the changed loyalties of Theydon Bois in 1470 had indeed been influenced by the altered fortunes of the wool trade.



The fact that the old St Mary's church closely abutted Theydon Hall strongly suggests that the church was founded by this former manor.

In the picture above, we see (in black) the church's position - lying within the confines of the 'grave-yard'. BHO online (from Victoria County History) tells us that *'if the earlier dedication to St. Botolph is accepted there may have been a Saxon church on the same site'*.

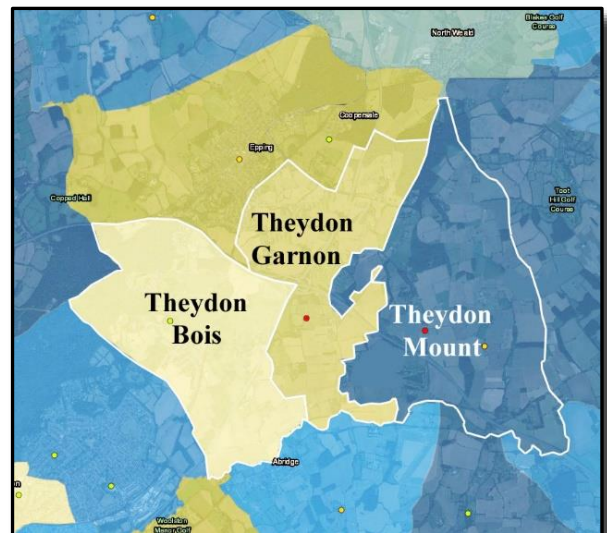
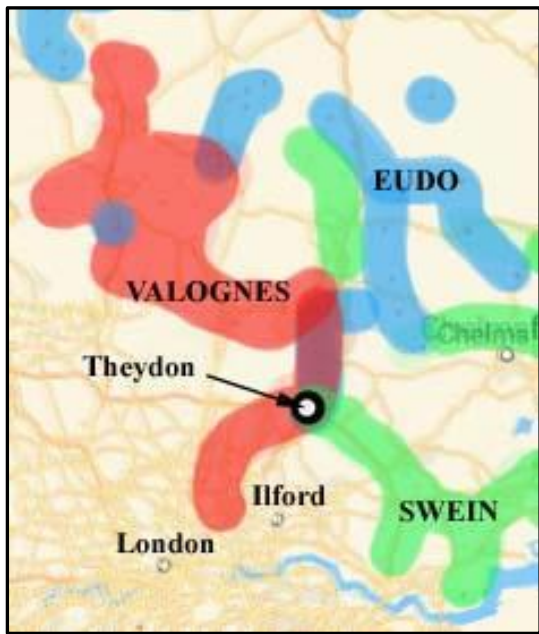


This is Theydon Hall today - the driveway runs just south of what used to be the 'graveyard'. As we have said, the first candidate for an Anglo-Saxon founder of this site would be Saint Botolph himself. This would seem to be too much to hope for but, after our saint died, there is no doubt that in C8 his acolytes would have taken over the work of spreading the good news of Christianity.

Then, in C9, came the Vikings. One of the first things *they* did was to sack and destroy Botolph's Icanho Abbey (70 miles to the NW in Suffolk) as well as hundreds of other Christian buildings. In 878 however, at Wedmore, Alfred the Great successfully negotiated a peace treaty and the Danelaw line was established. It restricted the Danes to the northern part of East Anglia and makes it unlikely that they had anything to do with the more southerly Theydon Bois.

The next two 'Anglo-Saxon' periods when the earlier church might have been built were those of Monastic Reform in the latter half of C10 and the reign of Canute the Great in early C11. During those periods the well-known and popular Saint Botolph would have been well remembered. Indeed his importance was such that in c. 969 his relics were disinterred from Icanho, stored for a while at nearby Grundisburgh and eventually divided and enshrined in religious places of importance.

If at that time a new church were being built at Theydon Bois and the founder was looking for a suitable dedication, Saint Botolph would have been a prime contender - perhaps even more so if the founder were a 'wool' man.



Above is a map of the parish boundaries as they stand today and it would be convenient if the earlier manors had covered similar areas with perhaps Swein and Eudo sharing Theydon Mount, William being lord of Theydon Garnon manor and Peter of Valognes holding Theydon Bois but life is not that easy for the researcher and we have to accept that we are unlikely ever to know the actual distribution.

Domesday tells us that in 1086 four people were the 'landowners' of separate parcels of land in Theydon Bois: Swein of Essex, Eudo the Steward, Peter of Valognes and William son of Constantine (the name Constantine sounds grand but this Constantine was not a person of any significance). The only land held by William was in Theydon itself.

The map above shows how they each held Essex land in the neighbourhood and were united at Theydon.

Twenty years previously - prior to the Norman Conquest - each parcel was the property of (in the same respective order) the Anglo-Saxons Godric, Wulfmer, Hacun (together with Wulfwin and seven free men), and the aforementioned Swein. The assumption that they were Anglo-Saxons is based on the fact that they were already resident in the country before 1066 but see footnote.⁸

It looks as if the contingent based at Theydon Bois consisted of **Hacun, Wulfwin and the seven free men**. It is almost certain that they were all farmers and it is likely that their families had been working the area for generations.

In earlier centuries wool had always been a subsistence commodity when a small number of sheep were kept to produce sufficient wool, milk and meat for one family whilst at the same time providing valuable manure to improve their crop-growing soil.

But the time came when the potential for large scale commercial sheep trading was suddenly realised and put into effect.

⁸ Although in fact, like today, Britain was a popular place and many Normans had taken up residence even before the Conquest.

This dramatic change probably occurred over a very short period although it would have been the result of its gradual development over a number of centuries. We are told that by the time of the Norman Conquest ‘*sheep were everywhere*’⁹ and this is confirmed by the livestock records in the Domesday Book.

Arguably c. A.D.1000 might be a suitable date from which to work as the time when English farmers recognised and acted upon sheep farming being a commercial viability.

Reverting then to Theydon Manor and Church, let us consider its timeline.

<i>Guide</i>	<i>Actual</i>	<i>Timeline for Theydon Bois Church</i>	<i>Alternative timeline</i>
<i>date</i>	<i>date</i>	<i>Events according to BHO pp. 251-255</i>	<i>(or) BHO pages 255-257</i>
600			
650	c.620	Birth of Saint Botolph	
700			
750			
800		This church might have been founded	
850		earlier than 1020 but there is no evidence for this	
900			
950	1020?	Foundation of the church? - perhaps by one of Hacun's ancestors.	
1000	1020	The dedication to St Botolph probably dates from this period.	
1050	1066	<i>(Norman Conquest)</i> Held by the Anglo-Saxon Hacun.	
1100	1086	Held by Peter of Vaolnesin association with 'Walter'.	
1150	1166	Held by William de Bosco	1166 Church given to St Bartholomew Priory Smithfield.
1200	1235	Held by another William de Bosco	1187 Henry II confirms St Bartholomew Priory gift.
1250	1248	Hugh de Bosco releases the advowson of Theydon Bois	1248 Hugh de Bosco quitclaims advowson to the prior.
1300	1289	Reynold, abbot of Waltham enfeoffed with the manor.	
1350		<i>The church seems likely to have been dedicated to St Botolph from its foundation until c.1470</i>	1335 Theydon Bois rectory appropriated to the priory.
1400			
1450	1456	Site recorded as ' Theydon Bois Sancti Bothulfi '	
1500	1485	Site recorded as All Saints . Thus rededicated about 1470?	
1550	1540	<i>(Reformation)</i> Waltham Abbey dissolved (the last abbey to do so).	1539 St Bartholomew's Priory dissolved.
1600	1540	Robert Fuller, last abbot of Waltham, granted rectory & advowson.	1540 Grant to Waltham's Robert Fuller (as adjacent).
1650	1616	3rd Edward Elrington acquired manor, rectory and advowson	
1700		Perhaps just known as 'Theydon Bois church'?	
1750	1768	Re-dedicated to St Mary	
1800	c.1800	Manor and estate owned by Lord and Lady Dare.	
1850	1844	Demolished	
1900	1846	New church opened 1.25 miles to NW	

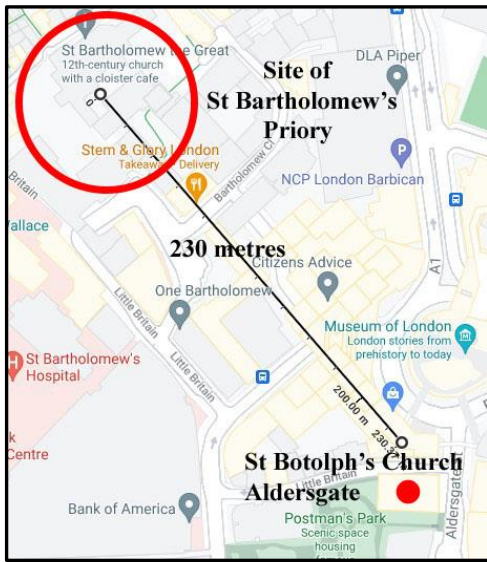
Fig. 1. Timeline for Theydon Bois manor and church.¹⁰

There is some confusion in British History Online concerning the story of Theydon Bois. Some of this can perhaps be put down to a conflict between details of the manor and details of the church. Both would normally be expected to have developed hand in hand but at Theydon there is some doubt about this.

As you will see from the table above the 1248 record on the left hand column shows the advowson of the church passing to Waltham Abbey whereas that on the right hand column sees it go to St Bartholomew's Priory in Smithfield, London.

⁹ Faith, R., 2012. The structure of the market for wool in early medieval Lincolnshire. *Economic History Review*, 65(2), pp. 674-700.

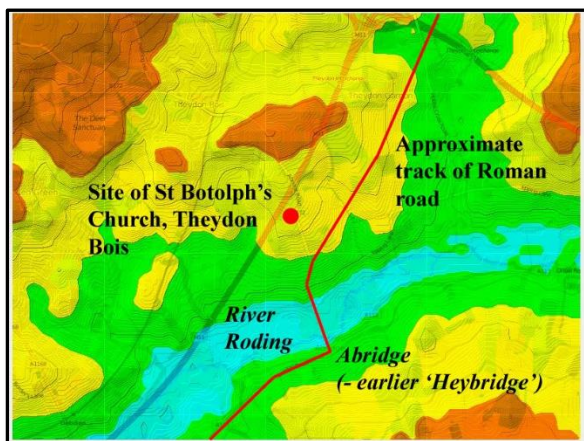
¹⁰ Details gleaned from <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/essex/vol14/> (accessed 19 May 2021).



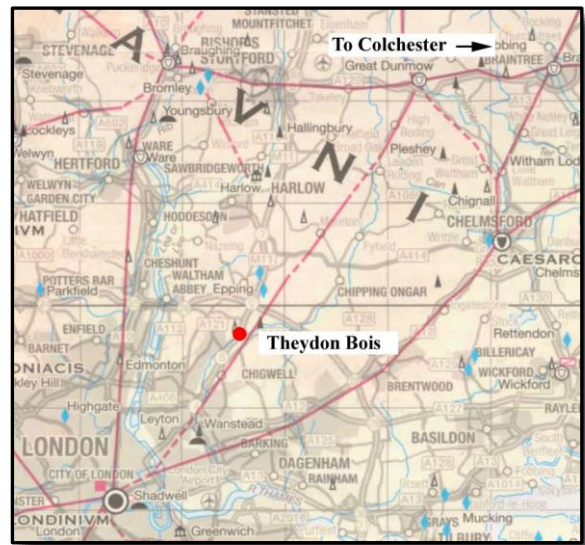
Both were institutions of Augustinian canons regular, and the latter, interestingly, lay only 230 metres from St Botolph's church at Aldersgate - fuelling suspicion that the record of the St Botolph dedication might somehow have been influenced by this connection.

Building on the timeline, my hypothesis is that prior to 1066 Hacun established a farm and buildings on the site which would eventually become the manor of Theydon Hall. As such he would have been the squire of a large community. Domesday records tell us that twenty years later **Peter of Valognes** had taken over as both tenant-in-chief and lord of that same manor which then supported 12 villagers, 8 smallholders and 7 slaves. (This would account only for the men and not their families which would add a considerable number of wives, children and dependent older relatives).

They were farming 92 pigs and 157 sheep and had 2 cobs and 12 beehives. In 1066 **Hacun** had had only half that number of pigs and one third the number of sheep but it would still have been a large enough enterprise to warrant the provision of a church for the benefit of his family and the labourers.



Historically Theydon Bois had always been a significant site where the Roman road (and earlier ancient trackways) crossed the river at Abridge after coming from London and then heading up to Great Dunmow and thence to Colchester, Ipswich and the north.



Roman roads have for a long while been considered to be significant to the siting of Saint Botolph churches since there always seems to be one such road within a radius of 3 miles. The significance for this is coming under some debate on the basis that many Roman roads are 'shadowed' by ancient trackways (as, for example, at Shenley) and it is often *these* roads upon which the St Botolph churches are actually sited.

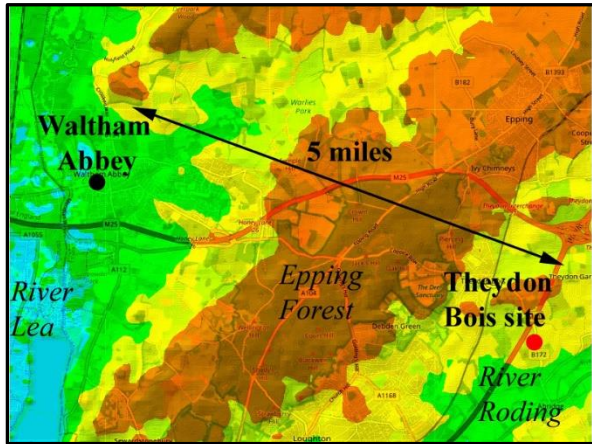
At Theydon Bois, not only do we have the Roman road, but also (in the Early and High Middle Ages) the major arterial waterway of the River Roding - and we must remember that at this time waterborne transport was most popular as the least expensive and the safest means of moving people and goods.

As shown in the *Timeline* above, Peter de Valognes passed the manor on to the **de Bosco** family and it was this family from which the '**Bois**' was inherited. It seems a reasonable guess that the de Boscos were originally Italian and that the Norman speaking inhabitants of Theydon 'gallicised' the name of *Bosco* to *Bois*.

The story goes that the village name had long been pronounced as *Boys* or *Boyce* but the spelling had never been defined. When the Great Eastern Railway came to Theydon, the clerk of Epping Parish Council was asked how the name should be written and it was he who advised 'Bois' on the basis that it was more reflective of the 'de Bosco' origins than *Boys* or *Boyce* would have been.

So far so good but it is here that the records become confused.

The second half of British History Online (pp. 255-257) tells us that de Bosco granted the church to the priory of St Bartholomew in Smithfield, London; that this was confirmed in a document of 1187 signed by Henry II; and that the priory retained the advowson of Theydon Bois Church until the dissolution of the priory in 1539.



The first half of British History Online however (pp.251-255), tells us that in 1289 the then lord of Theydon Bois manor, John de Tany, gifted the ownership of his demesne to Reynold, Abbot of Waltham Holy Cross. The problem arose that the tenant-in-chief of the estate - Tany's overlord - a Christine de Maule pleaded that the enfeoffment breached the Statute of Mortmain (1279) and so she promptly claimed back Theydon Bois for her own use.

Having regained it she enfeoffed the manor (the title to which seems to have been in a state of constant flux) with various other individuals. On p.252 however we are told that 'Theydon Bois was retained by Waltham until the dissolution of the abbey in 1540'.

Both halves agree that at the Reformation it was Robert Fuller, the last abbot of Waltham, who was left in possession of both the rectory and its advowson.

Frustratingly, it was during the 70 years before the Reformation (when there are no records of the identity of the church's rector) that the St Botolph dedication sneakily changed to All Saints.

I would like to think that it was a simple case of the parishioners taking the matter into their own hands and, as I wrote earlier, making the pragmatic decision that a dedication to All Saints would suit them better. Perhaps they hoped that

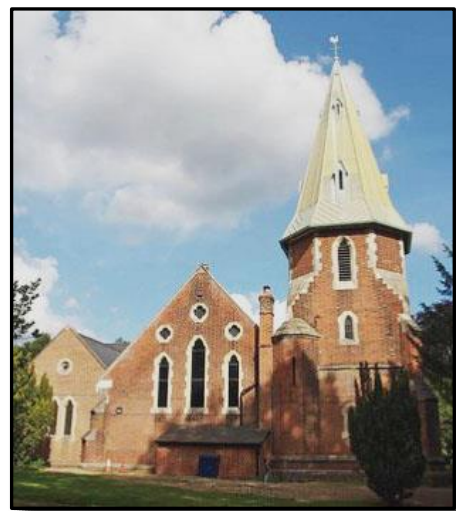
such a move would entitle them to a holiday on every saints' day.

They might have lived to regret this because Henry VIII soon wielded a heavy stick and suppressed the saints almost entirely to the extent that the building would simply have had to become known as "Theydon Bois Church".

By C19 it had acquired its post-Reformation dedication to St Mary the Virgin and is recorded as being a small building with a wooden cupola containing three bells.¹¹ In 1842 the rector decided that it was of insufficient size to accommodate the congregation and too far away from the centre of the village to be efficacious so after obtaining permission from the Bishop of London he set about correcting both these deficiencies in one fell swoop.

At the same time (as recorded in the Village Design Statement of 2018) he brought to an end 700 years of the church's history 'almost without trace'. For 'church's history' one can in many ways read 'village's history' the loss of which might be regarded as highly regrettable. Little wonder then that most of today's villagers have no idea that their church was once dedicated to the Patron Saint of Travellers.

The replacement was constructed very swiftly - perhaps too swiftly because although it opened on 5th June 1844, it was, within five years (by 14th June 1849) in such an 'unsatisfactory condition' that the architect Sydney Smirke had to be engaged to re-build it. The replacement St Mary the Virgin opened in 1851. The picture below is taken from the church website.



In Volume III page 257 of my *Botolph Trilogy*¹² it was A.D.649 when Botolph and a large group of his monks sailed from Northfleet in Kent, across the River Thames and up into the River Roding

¹¹ One thinks of a cupola as being dome-shaped but they can be square and this one might well have resembled Lambourn Church as seen below on p.10.

¹² Available from Earlsgate Publishing, 17 Cliffe House, Folkestone CT20 2TY. To order telephone 07802 646-644.

where they fell into company with a ‘mere cockleshell of a boat’ sailed by three children who led them up into Theydon Bay to meet the villagers. The wizened white-bearded elder of Theydon did not however give them the instant welcome for which they had hoped.

“The old man remained silent as Botolph gazed back steadily, allowing the piercing blue eyes to penetrate and explore his soul. The time came when it seemed that the antennae should by then have found the answer to whatever questions they were asking, and Botolph concluded it was he who should make the opening gambit. He was about to do so when the man nodded his head as he said quietly, “Welcome to our shore Father.” That was all it took. The atmosphere changed immediately. The sons took their hands from the seaxes. As a result of some mystical signal the women and children turned back into the village and smiles returned to everyone’s faces.”

Discussion

All the indications are that the original church on the Abridge Road was indeed once dedicated to Saint Botolph. Using our classification format this would fit into **B(ii) - a Travellers’ church founded between 800 and 1066**. But wait! Apart from mentioning the fact that the church bordered a major arterial river and lay close by an important Roman road, actual passing ‘travellers’ have hardly been mentioned in the above narrative.

The *primary* and earliest purpose of Hacun’s church would surely have been to provide spiritual support for the villagers. Its position on a major highway would have been a *secondary* function leading, perhaps, to its becoming a ‘Travellers’ church’. There is no record of it ever gaining any status as a result of the receipt of votive offerings from ‘glad-to-have-survived’ travellers. Indeed in later years it seems to have been somewhat overshadowed by Waltham Abbey. As Janet Cooper told us above, Saint Botolph’s churches are often found adjacent to bridges and the presence of the bridge at Abridge must be taken into consideration when trying to solve the riddle of the rationale behind the St Botolph dedication.

Was this church dedicated to Saint Botolph:

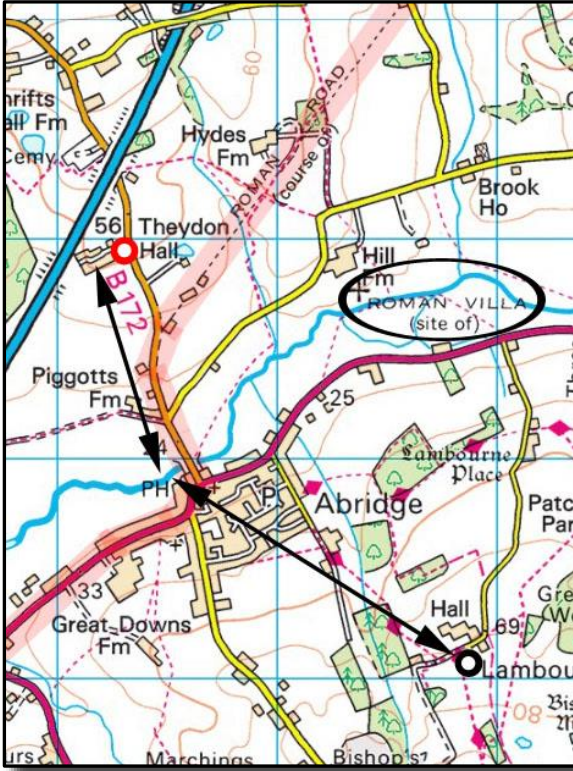
- (i) ... because it was in a sheep farming area and people were **praying for good harvests and successful sales of fleece**? The peak of popularity for a St Botolph dedication born of this motive (Patron saint of farmers) was C13 but it would not have been out of the question as early as C10?

- (ii) ... or because of its strategic position on a major highway where people wanted **to pray and give thanks for safe journeys**? (Patron saint of travellers). In this case the dedication is likely to have been earlier - perhaps even C7?
- (iii) ... Was the church a ‘gate guardian’ associated with the bridge - i.e. in fact a ‘bridge guardian’? As Dr Graham Jones noted in the correspondence section of *The Botolphian* of 1st February 2020 when referring to another church at Hardham: **‘the maintenance of the medieval crossing, whether bridge or causeway, was, as often the case, entrusted to a keeper who was also a hermit or otherwise in minor orders, possibly with a chapel on or near the bridge for which a dedication in honour of Botolph would have been entirely appropriate.’** It seems entirely likely that the original little church at Theydon Bois performed this function.

Once the church had become established, being only half a mile away on higher ground, it would have become an important landmark for those fording the River Roding or (some centuries later) crossing the bridge on their way perhaps to Ipswich. There seems to be no record of when the original bridge was built but it is shown in Christopher Saxon’s 1576 map of Essex when it was called *Hey bridge*.



The parish boundary passes along the centre of the River Roding but it looks likely that (as at Hardham) the bridge was originally within the parish of Theydon Bois.



The only other contender for the position of 'bridge guardian' for Abridge would be the lovely C12 St Mary's and All Saints' church at Lambourn but that lies further away both from the bridge and (more importantly) from the ancient trackway and Roman road (shown above shaded in red) so we can discount this. One wonders if the old Theydon Bois church looked anything like today's church at Lambourn.



This picture is by courtesy of Peter Rowlinson and shows, looking from left to right, the presence of a little Early English (or even Anglo-Saxon?) lancet window high up on the wall, a Tympanum over the south doorway and a tiny Lowside Window at the west end of the chancel where it abuts the nave.

Like the Theydon Bois church it probably struggled to accommodate all the C19 parishioners - but at least, thank goodness, the Lambourn rector did not decide to pull it down.

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Andy Eagle from Scarning in

Norfolk has been putting his time to good use during the lockdown. Scarning featured in *The Botolphian* of 1st December 2019 which was the issue in which I parodied the Hughes Mearns poem:

*Last night I saw upon the stair
A little man who wasn't there ...*

My parody was symptomatic of my feeling of frustration whilst writing about a village where the historically recorded St Botolph's church had 'gone missing'.

Andy however, has come up with some answers and has generously given permission for his research to be published below.

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The Mystery of Spoonbridge and St Botolph's Chapel

To locate the site of St Botolph's Chapel we need to know where Spoonbridge is, and when I started this quest nobody seemed to know!

Spoonbridge is mentioned in records and some from the reign of Edward III, 1351 to be exact, make mention of both these mysterious constructions:

Thomas, son of Baldwin, gave lands at the church, the house called Stubbes, and lands called Sponesbrugge.

Ralph, son of Peter, gave them his meadow between the chapel of St. Butolph and Sponesbergh.

Later, the chapel appears again in wills of various Scarning worthies during the 16th century:

Will of Thomas Hoo of Hengham, dated 8 April 1516. to the fraternite or gilde of Saynt Bothulph in Skernyng 6s.8d. or a cowe at the discretion of his executors.

Will of John Sekker of Skernyng, dated 3 July 1519, contains bequests, with others, to St. Botulphe chapel, to St. Petyrs gilde.

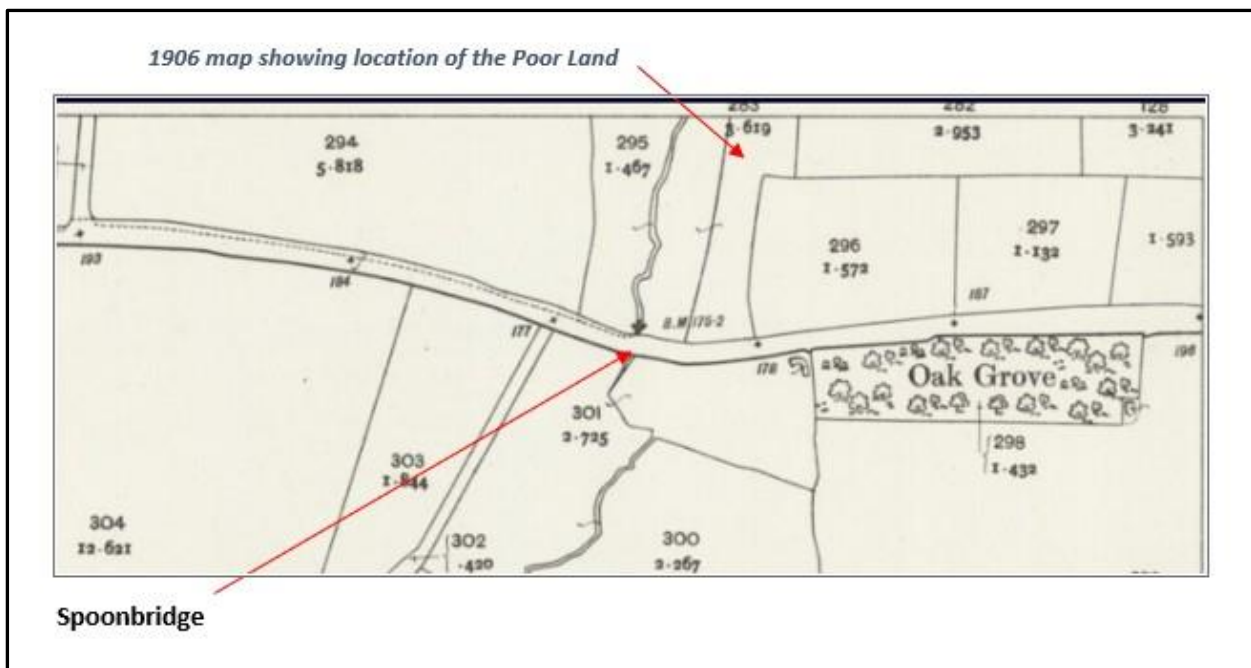
In the Terrier, or list of Glebe lands and tithes of 1747, there is reference to Poor Land, which still remains as part of the Scarning charities:

“Lands belonging to the poor of the parish church of Scarning, one piece of Meadow contg **about 4 acres abutting upon the Kings Highway leading from Scarning Church to Spoonbridge on the South &** upon the Lands of Eliz. Batch towards the North upon a piece of Land called Hollcraft on the East and the Lands of several persons on the West now in the Occupy of Matt*. Sherret at the yearly rent of 50s.”

Finally, an 18th century record notes “one acre at Spoonbridge” – possibly this is Ralph’s medieval meadow.

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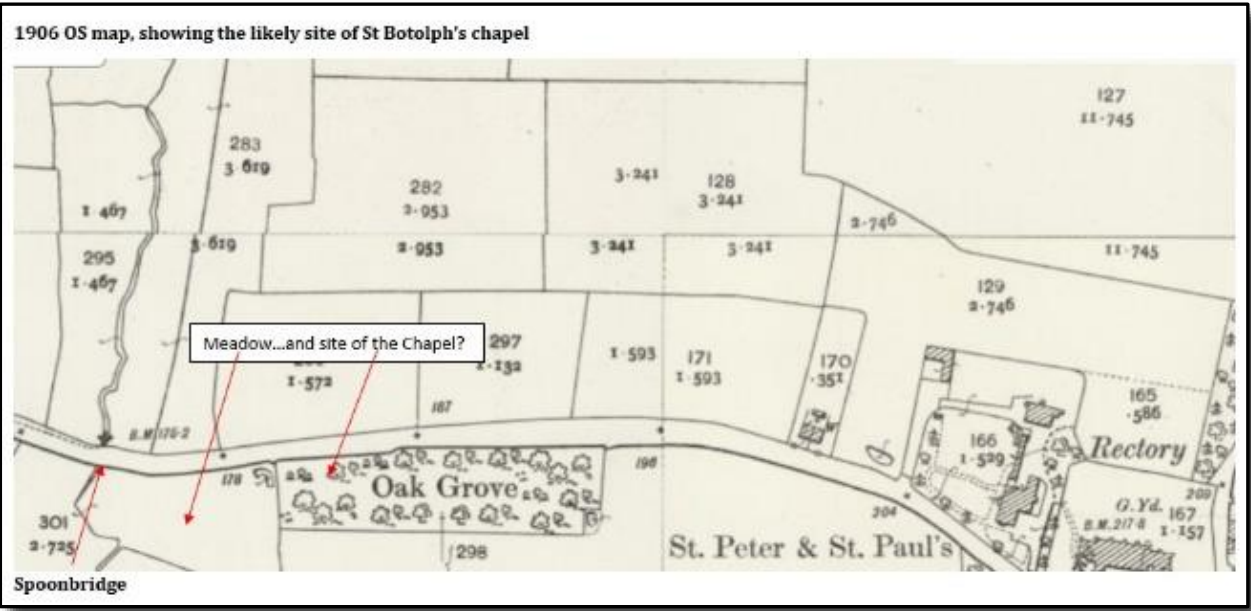
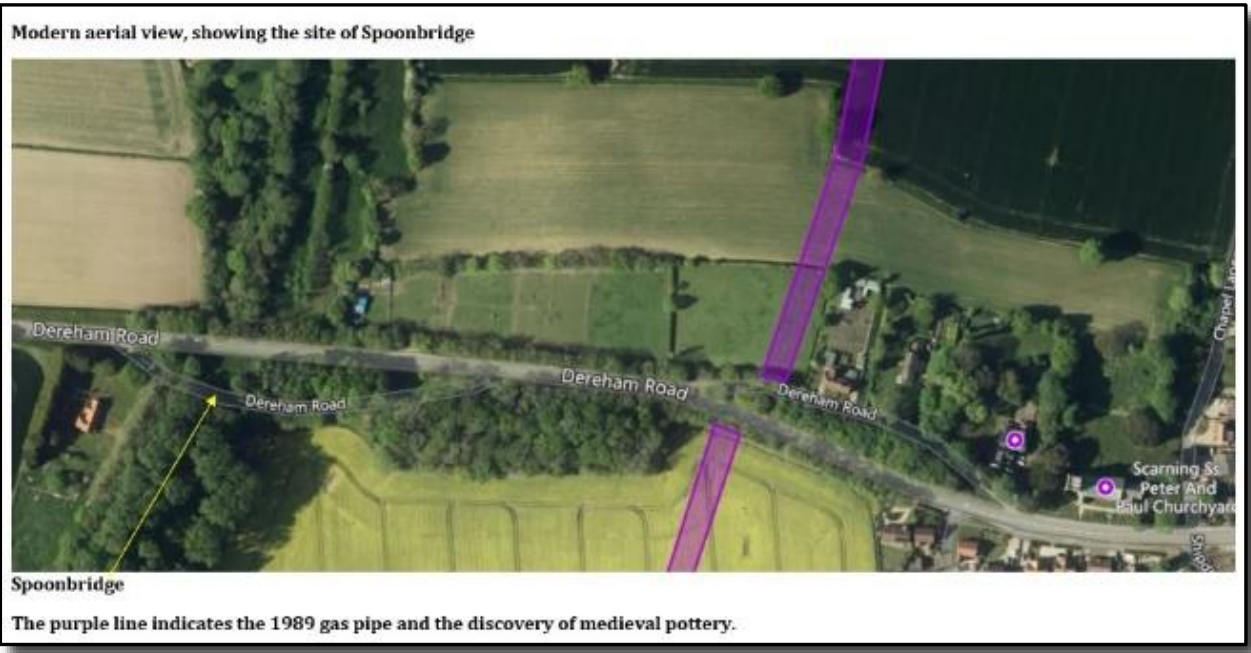
Following scrutiny of several maps and using the clues given above, the site of Spoonbridge appears to be found...and it became very evident following a recent visit to the village!



To the left is a photograph showing the bridge over the drain which goes under both the new and old main roads, in the neglected layby to the west of the oak grove.

In centuries past this might have been a ford and before being bridged, but the origins of the name of Spoonbridge are unknown.

Having now identified the location of Spoonbridge, it is possible to suggest site of the meadow, and therefore St Botolph’s Chapel, mentioned in Medieval records: *“Ralph, son of Peter, gave them his meadow between the chapel of St. Butolph and Sponesbergh”*



The pond to the west of Oak Grove,¹³ and indeed the whole grove, has some interesting raised earthworks and could be medieval, and they merit further investigation by proper archaeologists!

It might be notable that groves of oaks were often sacred sites in pre-Christian religions in northern Europe, and later adopted by Christianity.

The location of most chapels dedicated to St Botolph, the patron saint of wayfarers, was close to a main road, near a water source and possibly on high ground; all of these match the proposed site. An 1846 map of farm fieldnames, provided by Chris Farnham, and comparison with other views of this area strongly support the location of St Botolph's Chapel.

¹³ See 'Spoooner' below with reference to the 'Oak Grove' shown on this map.



This fits in with the “*meadow between the chapel of St. Butolph and Sponesbergh*” and a location on rising land, from a water source (Well Meadow and the stream) and close to a highway. Court records of 1570 even mention “*in campo vocat Chapell feld als. Buttolfelde*” – in a field called Chapel field or also Buttolf field.

So in conclusion, my suggestion is that Scarning’s Chapel of St Butolph was sited either on the land occupied now by the oak grove, or very close by in the field to the south, somewhere close to the acre of land donated by Ralph all those centuries ago.



The LIDAR picture and 1946 aerial view shows this area, and some intriguing land markings which might be relevant, and welcomes further investigation.

Andy Eagle, April 2021.

Many thanks Andy - there seems little doubt that all your hard work brings us very close to the definitive location of the chapel - the solid foundations of which might, with luck, suddenly come to light one day.

The Spooner

Andy kept me in touch with his progress while he was doing this research and his efforts prompted me to do a little digging of my own.

I was intrigued about why it should be called 'Spoonbridge'. With the help of Mr Google I discovered that 'spoons' or 'spons' in Middle English¹⁴ was the name given to 'shingles' - the wooden tiles (commonly made of oak) measuring about 2ft long and 7ins wide which until C15 were used for roofing after which they were priced out of the market by the greater availability of cheaper tiles made from baked clay.

Thus it would seem likely that the Scarning *Spooner* lived adjacent to the *Sponesbrugge* bridge where the proximity of the Oak Grove would offer a ready source of raw material ... *quod erat demonstrandum!*

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Correspondence

1. Once again I have received some lovely emails of appreciation and good wishes - thank you all for those.

2. **John Sennett** from Swyncombe has kept me in touch with the very interesting research he has been doing on his St Botolph's church. He is now, I gather, just about ready to publish.

3. **Rosemary Hammick** wrote on the subject of sheep - Botolphian and otherwise. She lives in London but is a 'stock checker' for the London Wildlife Trust as well as being one of the Friends of the City Churches.

4. **Heather Erguvanli**. As recorded under item 5 of correspondence in the last issue, Heather had written from Bradenham asking a question which I was unable to fully answer. Her question concerned figurines on wall brackets in the altar area.

I had hoped that somebody might provide an answer but nothing was forthcoming. A few days later however, whilst reading Professor Nicholas Orme's *English Church Dedications* I discovered (on page 6) the following note:

The [patron] saint's image seems to have been usually placed to the north of the high or chief altar of the church at the east end of the chancel, the south end being occupied by an image of Mary. ... if there were two patron saints like

Peter and Paul, images of both should be provided. At Exeter Cathedral - dedicated to Peter and Mary, as well as to Paul by C14 - the image of Peter stood on the north side of the high altar, Paul's on the south side, and Mary's in the neighbourhood of Paul's.

As a reference for this Professor Orme gives William Lyndwood, *Provinciale* (Oxford, 1679), p.252.

5. **Nick Molyneux** who has corresponded in these columns before, sent an intriguing email about a 'Battle Bridge' in Upton, Nottinghamshire. Several emails have passed between us but sadly I have not yet been able to study the matter fully. The essence of the mystery is that Nick can find no records of any local battle which would justify the bridge's name. His favoured solution at the moment is that it derived from a local landowner. I, of course, am looking for a corruption of *Botolph's Bridge* but although I have a feeling that I am on a loser this time I believe the subject warrants investigation. The location is in good sheep farming country on the western side of the River Trent, opposite Newark, with Boston only 33 miles to the east and Lincoln only 15 miles to the northeast. So the mix has all the right ingredients. Nick and I will continue to battle(!) it out. Watch this space.

6. **Heather Tolputt** from my own church of Holy Trinity here in Folkestone, very kindly asked me if I would lead a 'coming out of lockdown' tour of the outside of the church. Limiting you might think ...but not so. The church is a young one by my standards (1868) so I had to tweak my grey cells onto a different frequency. I found it a most interesting exercise - and Hilary tells me that my victims quite liked it too. I have always admired and loved our place of worship but I certainly grew to appreciate it even more when preparing for that event.

7. **Father Robert Godding** of the Society of Bollandists (based in Brussels) invited me last month to a *Lumen Christi* webinar - the first webinar I had ever attended. Father Robert gave a most interesting talk on the work of the Bollandists since C16. I was familiar with much of it as a result of my spending some time at the college in 2014 when I was researching *Daniel Papebroch* for my M.A. Daniel was a Jesuit monk who travelled all over Europe in C17 collecting manuscripts and 27 of them concerned St Botolph. A compilation of these was published in the *Acta Sanctorum* and they will be the subject of my book *Daniel Papebroch and the Saint*

¹⁴ Middle English refers to the period between Old English and Modern English and covers (very

approximately) A.D.1150 to 1450. [NB *The Botolphian* does BC and AD and does not stoop to CE].

Botolph Manuscripts which I hope to publish within the next eighteen months. It was good to talk to Father Robert again.

8. Jane Hogg wrote from Longthorpe where the St Botolph's church is undergoing a revamp. When the floors were taken up, a wonderful collection of carved gravestones was discovered. She has kindly sent me the pictures and I understand that a call has gone out for the help of any experts who might be able to decipher the inscriptions and interpret the symbolism of the carvings. All quite fascinating and it will be most interesting to hear the results of this.

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: **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.

1. Nearly 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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