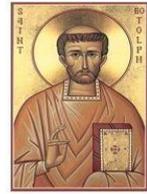




# The Botolphian

Newsletter of  
The Society of Saint Botolph

[www.botolph.info](http://www.botolph.info)



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President: Revd Timothy L'Estrange, Vicar of St.Gabriel's Church, North Acton.

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1st January 2014.

## Highlights this month

- Christmas activities.
- The bad news of the Boston, Lincolnshire flood and the good news that a new Team Rector will be installed in February.
- St Botolph's Church, Swyncombe.
- Botolph's destination in France.
- Correspondence from Alex Pavitt, Jean Mableson, Alison Boreham, Joe Bain and Christopher Micklethwaite.
- Welcome to 13 new members

## Editorial.

I hope everyone had a happy Christmas and I am pleased to wish you all a very Happy, Healthy & Prosperous New Year.

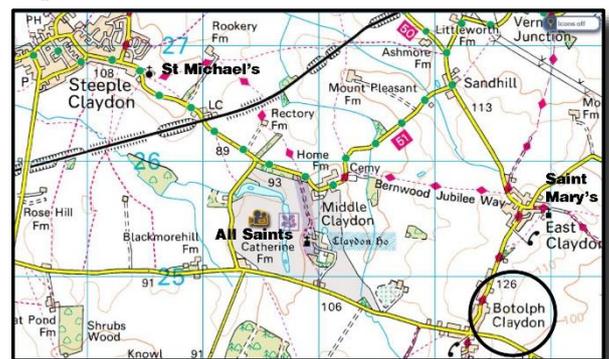
Just before Christmas I had cause to visit Buckingham University so took the opportunity to visit two Botolph Church sites, the first being at Swyncombe (pronounced 'Swincom') where I was given a warm welcome by Len Ashby - more about that in the Church Feature below. While I was there however I purchased two souvenir items, - namely a 'Botolph Shopping Bag' and a 'Botolph Tea Towel' which I arranged for my daughter to pop into my wife, Zina's Christmas Stocking which in our family is traditionally 'opened' on Boxing Day.

I must say that the expression on Zina's face when she undid the wrapping was a joy to behold and I have been chuckling about it ever since. As you might imagine, Botolph has become a part of our family - (perhaps even to excess?) - and Zina's comment that this present was *really* what she wanted and she wondered how she had managed to live without a Botolph Shopping Bag thus far, all entered nicely into the spirit of the occasion. The felony was compounded when she reached the Botolph Tea Towel!

We all agreed however that it was full marks to the Swyncombe church for being so enterprising - we *had* been getting short of tea towels.

**The other site** I visited was the hamlet of Botolph Claydon which is about 7 miles south of Buckingham. This is the most south-easterly of the Claydon family of settlements, the other members being 'East Claydon, Claydon, Middle Claydon and Steeple Claydon' - all of which lie within a 2-mile radius. At Steeple Claydon we find St Michael's church, - at Middle Claydon there is All Saints and at East Claydon there is St Mary's, - but where, one might ask, is St Botolph's?

History tells us that the first community (at *Steeple* Claydon) dates back to AD 660. The earliest of the three extant churches is St Mary's (C13); the other two date from C14. It might of course be the case that the first church on the site of one of these three was originally dedicated to Saint Botolph - but until proved otherwise we have to assume that the 'Botolph' part of the hamlet's name is spurious.



Should any readers decide to take up the cudgels and explore this area more thoroughly, it is worth noting that the All Saints church has a wonderful collection of monuments to the Giffords and the Verneys, one of whom was standard bearer to King Charles I at the Battle of Edgehill.

## The flood at St Botolph's, Boston, Lincolnshire:

The December weather wreaked havoc in many quarters of course, - not the least being at the 'Stump'.

There was damage to the shop, café and parish office but the church is now open for prayer and the weekly pattern of services continues as usual. It is expected that the recovery team will be working in the church for several weeks but it is hoped that this will not extend into months.

Telephone communication with the church is difficult because many of the lines are not working and others seem constantly engaged.

The good news is that the new Team Rector of the Parish of Boston, the Reverend Canon Alyson Buxton, will be installed by the Bishop of Lincoln on Wednesday 26th February 2014 at 7.30 p.m. Alyson started her professional career as a registered general nurse. She has followed this by being National Projects Manager in the pharmaceutical industry then, after gaining a Masters in Theology and another Masters in Mission and Ministry she became Rector of the South Wolds Group and Rural Dean of the Lincolnshire Deanery of Horncastle. She is married to Derek and they have two grown up daughters.

We look forward to welcoming Alyson in her new position and hope that she forms a strong contact with this Society.

Anybody wishing to contribute to the flood damage repairs, is requested to send their cheque to St Botolph's Parish Office, 1 Wormgate, Boston, Lincolnshire PE21 6NP.

... back to Swyncombe ...

### Church Feature

## Swyncombe

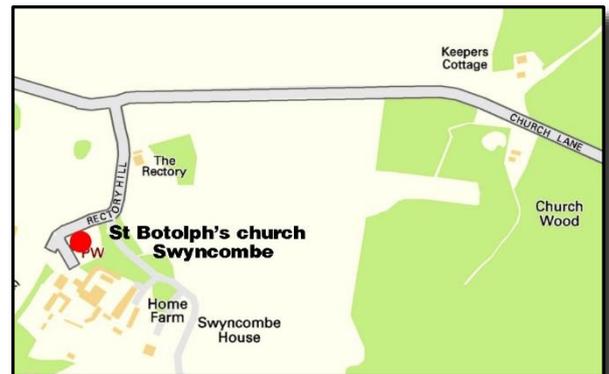
**Approach:** Leave the M40 at Junction 6 and head along the B4009 to Watlington and turn left here on the B480 to Cookley Green. When just through the village turn right and then immediately left and follow Church Lane for three quarters of a mile. Turn left past The Rectory and park opposite the church.

**Key:** The church is permanently open.

**Contact:** Revd Christopher Idris Evans, Tel: 01491 612-494. The Rectory, Hill Road, Watlington OX49 5AD.

**Location:** 51.60644, -1.01601. RG9 6EA.

**Listed Grade:** II\*.



This lovely old church lies in a very secluded position close to the point where the ancient track known as the Ridgeway, passes over the crest of the Chilterns before it drops down to join the Icknield Way as it runs along the escarpment towards Norwich where it continues as the Peddars Way turning north towards the coast.



Several points are of interest, - the first is that the word '**Icknield**' is closely related to that of Boudicca's tribe the '**Iceni**' (Patricia Croxton-Smith points out that there was no 'soft c' in Anglo-Saxon and so this should be pronounced 'Ickeni') - and also to our Botolph's abbey of **Icanho**. The second point is that we are told that the Icknield way was a major trading route between Wiltshire and the Neolithic Flint Mines of Brandon near Thetford.

The builders of Swyncombe church (late C11) were probably Saxons working under the direction of their Norman masters from the abbey of Bec (near Le Havre). They clearly had no difficulty finding their building materials locally, for the church is made of plate flints generally laid vertically in a herringbone pattern in order to provide height to the walls. They are set in rubble and dressed with limestone ashlar.

The church is located in a hollow (or 'cumb') surrounded by Holm Oaks which provide large acorns beloved by swine - hence the settlement's name.



Len Ashby told me that the apse has clearly been added to the church later. This can be seen partly by the more random layout of the flints and partly because, due to the nave's south wall being eighteen inches longer than the north wall, the reliquary in the apse is off-centre when viewed from the nave.



The fortunes of Swyncombe have been intricately linked with Bec since the Norman conquest when the British lord of the manor, Wigod, allied himself to the Normans with the result that his daughter married into the family of the Baron of Bec. Right up until 1985 the church used to have regular visits from one of the Bec monks.

**Foundation of the site:** *c. AD 1080*

**History of existing church:** *Little alteration was made to the church until C19 when, after enlarging the chancel arch, Joseph Clark also restored the apse unblocking the north lancet*

*window and inserting two new ones, - one on the eastern and another on the southern aspect. You will note that, at the far end of the church in the picture above, the newer east window is central to the nave whereas the (original) square reliquary below it is misaligned as mentioned above. Before the Reformation this reliquary presumably held relics. It would be interesting to know to which saint these belonged.*

**Items of interest within the church:-**

1. *The C15-style Rood Screen dates from 1914.*
2. *The font is Anglo-Saxon/Norman but was recut in mid C19.*
3. *The piscina with its carved 'Green Man' head - (although I am not sure that this actually is a 'Green Man' since I cannot detect the usual acanthus leaves - however I will leave that argument to the experts). The piscina is unusual in that, rather than being just a bowl, it is fully functional as it drains outside to a soak-away. It was discovered in the foundations during the restoration of the porch and replaced in its rightful position.*



4. *The reliquary (behind the altar).*
5. *In the south jamb of the chancel arch there is an aumbry of which the oak lining is thought to date from the building of the church.*
6. *The simple red ochre wall paintings in the chancel with the 'Devil's tongue and tail' frieze.*



7. *The (1984) Agnus Dei window in the central window of the sanctuary, depicting Jesus as the lamb of God carrying the flag of St George.*



8. *The stained glass window in the south wall of the chancel. At the top is Saint Botolph holding Icanho Abbey in his left hand. The armorial bearings shown below him are those of the leading nobles who had an influence on this church.*



**Relevance of the church to Botolph's life:-**

*Probably none. There is no evidence that a foundation existed here in Botolph's lifetime. It seems more likely that the reason the church was dedicated to our saint was because of his position as Patron Saint of Travellers and the church's location on the ancient trackway.*

*When King John visited Normandy in 1203 he gave the monks of Bec the right to hold a three-day annual fair at Swyncombe - centred on St Botolph's day 17th June. A century or so later the date of the fair was brought forward to 4th June and then, later still it was put back to 7th July. The latter two dates are associated with St Martin and St Thomas a Becket respectively but it really looks more as if the chosen dates were dictated by the farming calendar rather than by any saintly connection. Between 1300 and 1500 Europe's summers are recorded as being noticeably colder and wetter.*

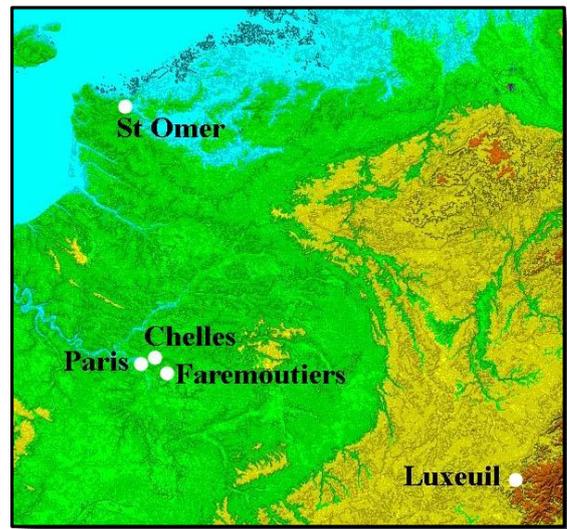
**Focus on Saint Botolph.**

**Botolph's continental destination:-**

Last month we looked at the ports that Botolph might have used whilst on his journey to or from France. This month I want to look at his destination.

There have been many suggestions as to where he might have been professed (i.e. had his training as a monk) and these include Germany, Chelles and Faremoutiers-en-Brie. His 'brother' Adulph is reputed to have become Bishop of Utrecht so perhaps the Low Countries should also be added to the list.

But there was a problem in that these were the very early days of Christianity in Europe. There were few monasteries that offered the sort of training that Botolph needed and the best ones were in France. From the point of view of the novice who wished to become a monk, there was a great deal of difference between a long-established church which might have functioned admirably to serve its congregations but was of little benefit to the aspiring student, - and a larger 'university-style' monastery that marketed its availability and professed its primary aim as being a seminary to train priests to spread the word of Christ.



One might think that Botolph would perhaps have chosen the monastery at St Omer since, for one thing it was close to Britain, and for another, 300 years later it turned out to be the place where his 'biographer' Folcard was professed. In 638 however, the community was only just becoming established and had certainly not yet gained its reputation as a seat of learning. Chelles similarly did not develop for another twenty years. Luxeuil might have been a good choice since that had been up and running for at least 50 years but it was a lot further to the east. That left Faremoutiers-en-Brie which was founded at about the same time that Botolph was born and so had nearly 20 years of experience under its belt - or should I say its 'cincture'?

Faremoutiers (or Evoriacum as it was called in those days) had been founded by a noblewoman called Burgundofara and, after her death the abbey took her name. Abbess Fara must have been an expert in marketing because it is known that many young British royal princesses came to Evoriacum to take the veil and several became abbesses there. As one of the first mixed monasteries it was a large institution catering for several hundred people. It seems likely that Botolph arrived there in about 638 and returned to Britain around 647.

### **Readers' Letters and Emails**

**Alex Pavitt, Jean Mableson and Alison Boreham** were kind enough to contact me and draw my attention to the newspaper article entitled '**£35m City hotel would damage church**'. This referred to St Botolph's Aldgate. It is of concern not only regarding the problem of mis-match of London architecture but also (I gather) regarding the actual structure of the church.

**Joe Bain (St Botolph's Club, Boston MA)** wrote expressing his concern about the flooding that had occurred at St Botolph's in Boston Lincolnshire and asking if a fund had been opened for contributions towards the restorations. *In answer to Joe, the contact for this is Peter Coleman, who is the Appeals Director at [appeal.boston@virgin.net](mailto:appeal.boston@virgin.net). Cheques may be sent to St Botolph's Parish Office, 1 Wormgate, Boston, Lincolnshire PE21 6NP.*

**Christopher Micklethwaite** wrote from St Botolph's, Quarrington to correct an error in the last newsletter - it is apparently only the *Chancel* roof which simulates an open barrel vault, - not the whole nave of Quarrington church. *Thank you Christopher.*

### **Thanks**

I would like to thank Len Ashby of Swyncombe and Lois Smith of Eastwick for giving up their time to show me around their churches.

### **Membership of SOSB**

I am delighted to welcome the following new members:-

Revd Christopher Idris Evans (Swyncombe)  
Tim Lewis (Swyncombe)  
Kenneth Turino (Nahant, Massachusetts)  
Estelle Jackson (Boston, Massachusetts)  
Francis Webb (Cambridge, Massachusetts)  
John McConnell (Winchester, Massachusetts)

William Lavelle (Santa Monica, California)  
Charles Dickinson (Boston, Massachusetts)  
Lawrence Shields (Newton, Massachusetts)  
Bill Mills (Folkestone)  
Peter Riley (Folkestone)  
Lois Smith (Eastwick)  
Peter Coleman (Boston, Lincolnshire)

*This represents a really good turnout from our American cousins this month, - my particular thanks to Joe Bain for spreading the word. Most of these new members are also members of the prestigious Saint Botolph's Club in Boston MA. It is good to see their enthusiasm for our saint (our saint is their saint too!). This now brings membership up to 222, - which is good - but ... please - no slacking in the New Year, - keep encouraging your friends sign up at [www.botolph.info](http://www.botolph.info) and receive their own newsletters.*

*Whilst on the subject of the website, the Map showing churches dedicated to Saint Botolph is at present not functioning correctly because the company that provided the server has recently gone into liquidation. Angelique is searching for a long term alternative.*

#### **Regular Endnotes**

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](mailto: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 a contraction of '**Botolph's Town**.'

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