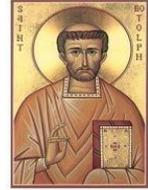




# The Botolphian

Newsletter of  
The Society of Saint Botolph

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



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

Issue Number: 59

1st March 2018

## Highlights this month

- St Botolph's Church, Stow Longa, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire.
- It gives me great pleasure to welcome Christine Hayes, Dorothy Halfhide and Michael Bintley to membership of the society.
- Correspondence from Dorothy Halfhide, AnnePegg, Phillip Buttolph, Andree Sladden, Patricia Croxton-Smith, Sue Jones, Peter Holliday and Robert Walker.

## Editorial

Zina and I had a wonderful day at St Botolph's Swyncombe, Oxfordshire on Sunday 18th February. It was good to meet John Sennett again and to enjoy some excellent pieces of cake baked by the good ladies of Swyncombe and district.

As John told me, the amazing thing about this church is that it thrives in spite of having no community. All members of the congregation are plucked from outlying villages. 23 years ago an enterprising lady who lived in the area asked the PCC if, in view of the great number of walkers who passed that way, she could set up a stall to provide them with soup, drinks, cakes etc. It was from this question that the Snowdrop Teas developed. To the date of our visit £4,000 had been raised for church funds over the previous two weekends. But it is so much more than that in terms of *fellowship* and *evangelism*. It was a wonderful atmosphere - dogs, kids and everyone were having so much fun and there was a real country community spirit pervading - something that money cannot buy - it just happens and is there to be relished when it does.

Having recently written about King Anna's journey from Suffolk to Winchester in 656 I was particularly interested in the *Icknield Way/Ridgeway/Swan's Way* phenomenon. I

wanted to see for myself the route that he would have taken - and again it was John Sennett who helped me on that score.

I had been looking at Icknield Way on the map and I was puzzled about the tortuous nature of the route. I expected it to be straight-ish . . . not Roman- road-straight perhaps but not the complex twists and turns shown by Mr Google. John explained that in Swyncombe's stretch - which comprises the Ridgeway - the farmers have, over the years, moved the pathway according to their convenience. They are obliged to keep the passage open but not necessarily to keep the path following the exact route of centuries. I assume this sensible explanation also applies to the other parts of this ancient trackway.

On a different tack - if anyone wishes to find an excuse to travel to the seaside next week, I shall be talking to Folkestone and District Local History Society on the subject of *Princess Eanswythe and Brother Botolph* at Holy Trinity Church Hall, Sandgate Road, Folkestone, CT20 2HQ on Wednesday 7th March at 7.30 for 8 p.m. Members free. Non-members £2.

## **S**tow Longa, Cambs.



**Approach:** From Cambridge take the A14 towards the northwest and continue on this road through Huntingdon. After 6 miles bear left to Spaldwick (do NOT take the turning to Easton). At the village sign on Spaldwick's small village green turn left onto the Stow Road. After 1.6 miles you will come to Stow village green with its C15 monument. Bear right here along Church Lane. After 200 yards the road comes to an end at a leafy glade where you can park outside the church.

**Location:** Church Lane, Stow Longa, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE28 0TN;  
**Lat/Long:** 52.3273, -0.377; **NGR:** TL107711.

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

**Contacts:** Churchwardens: Mr. R Whidborne 01480 860-018; Mrs. C. Hayes 01480 860-519.

**Priest:** Revd Stephen Bowring B.Mus. Tel 01480 860-792.

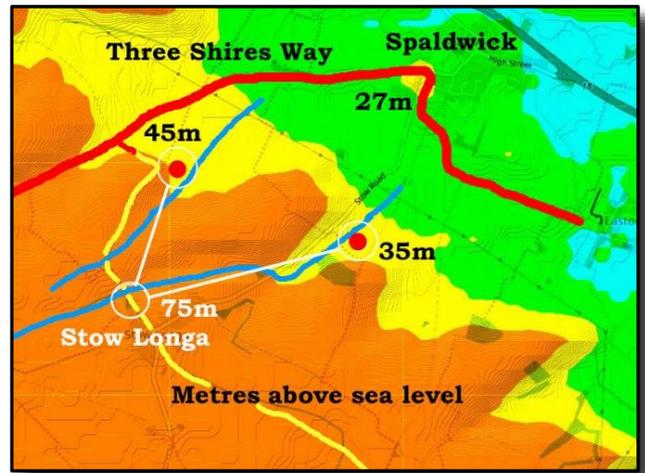
**Benefice:** South Leightonstone Benefice covering Spaldwick, Easton, Barham&Woolley, Covington, Tilbrook, Kimbolton

**Benefice Website:** [www.kymchurch.org.uk](http://www.kymchurch.org.uk).

**Stow Longa village website & Friends of St Botolph:** <http://www.stowlonga.org.uk>

**Church Services:** Services are held at 3:00pm on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in the month for evensong and at 9.30am on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in the month for communion. Other services are advertised in the parish magazine.

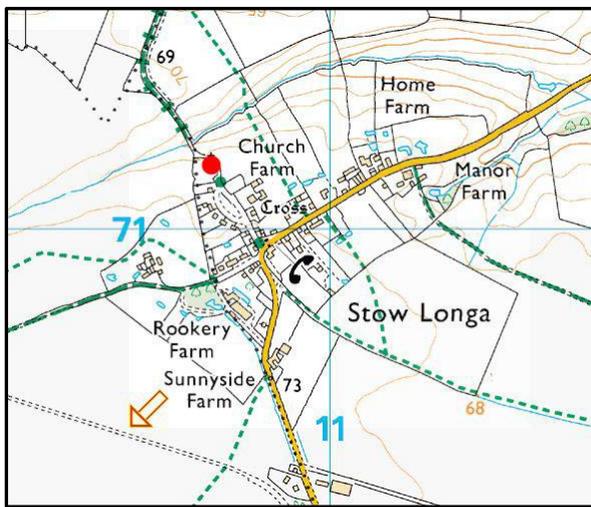
**Listed Grade:** II\*



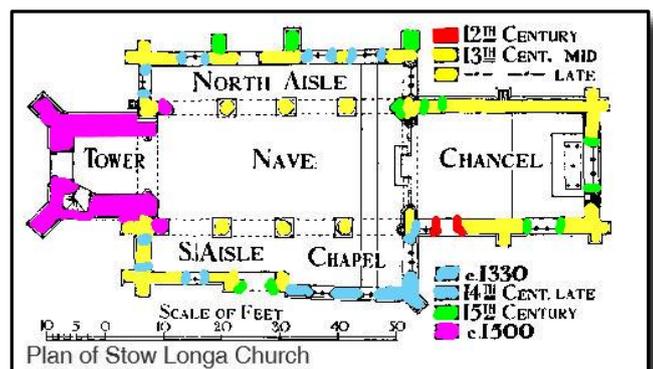
In this respect I was drawn to two areas as shown by the red dots in the map above. Both sites are close to the requisite streams and lie 30 or more metres lower than today's church. I looked closely at several old maps including an Ordnance Survey map of 1877 but these revealed no records of ancient ruins so I came to the conclusion that the builder chose the church's location for other specific reasons.



The building is tucked away behind the trees at the end of Church Lane and if one did not know it was there it would be easy to miss. It lies on an ancient footpath (shown in yellow on the contour map above) which runs southeast from the even more ancient Three Shires Way. The geology of the area is Oxford Clay.



One of the first things that I noticed about Stow Longa church while I was preparing this issue, was that it lies on the top of a hill rather than being "close to the bottom of an escarpment but well clear of water levels" as are the typical characteristics of early Botolph Churches. Stow Longa is eccentric in this respect and it made me wonder whether an earlier church might have existed further down the hill.





Today there is no porch and entry is straight into the south aisle but records reveal that, prior to 1888, there *was* a small porch made mostly of timber and plaster and with a tiled roof. Signs of its former existence are evident from the gable over the doorway. The porch fell into disrepair and became dangerous so was removed. Experts tell us that this C13 doorway is proportionately too large for the building and it is thought that it might have been brought from elsewhere. It was reset in 1888 and again in 1901.



There is a suggestion that the C12 priest's doorway (which we discuss later) was originally located in this position. The C16 trellis-framed triangular-topped wooden doors are a strange choice for an *arched* doorway and, unsurprisingly,

as you can see below, they are ill-fitting. Looking at the inside of the door and comparing it with the outside view, it hardly seems possible that there could be enough height for all that stonework *above* but looking again at the outside



... we can see that the three moulded orders of the arch (it looks like six orders if you count the pieces between) gradually splay out and take up a lot of the space.



The c.1500 four stage west tower is constructed of coursed limestone. The rectangles which are seen as dots running up the tower are 'put logs' - empty brick spaces which were used to insert the original scaffolding. Once they have done their job these would usually have been filled in - but not this time. One can perhaps imagine the master builder's exasperation having had the day off and then returning to find that the scaffolding had been

taken down without the holes being properly attended to. Stupid boy Pike!



Above the C16 west doorway of the tower there is a plaque bearing two shields of arms separated by a bishop's mitre. These are now badly eroded but the records tell us that one is 'on a chevron between three church bells and as many escallops - all within a bordure' . . . and the other is 'on a chevron between three roses.' *A History of the County of Huntingdon Volume 3* tells us that on the outside of the south wall (I am not sure if this refers to the south wall of the tower or of the nave proper) 'there is a contemporary carved black-letter inscription: *'Orate p aiab Robti Becke et Alicie uxor,'* - (pray for Robti Becke and his wife Alicie). I was unable to find this.



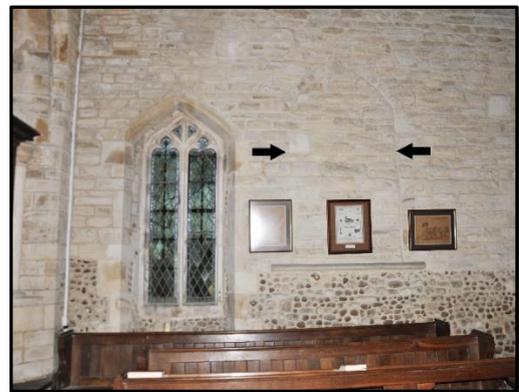
As we move around the building to its north side (the grass is beautifully maintained) we can see the upper windows of the Clerestory which was added in C15 to let more light into the church and to provide the extra grandeur of height.



To the east lies the chancel - somewhat narrower than the aisled nave . . .



. . . and what an unusual mixture of colours and patterns this side of the church exhibits. The north wall of the chancel has something of the Neapolitan Ice-cream about it - with **orange** at the top, then a splash of **vanilla** followed by a **strawberry** facing and a **leopard-skin** base. Competition comes from the buttress on the right which exhibits a touch of **pistachio**. On a more serious note, between the two arrows there are signs of a blocked-up window . . .



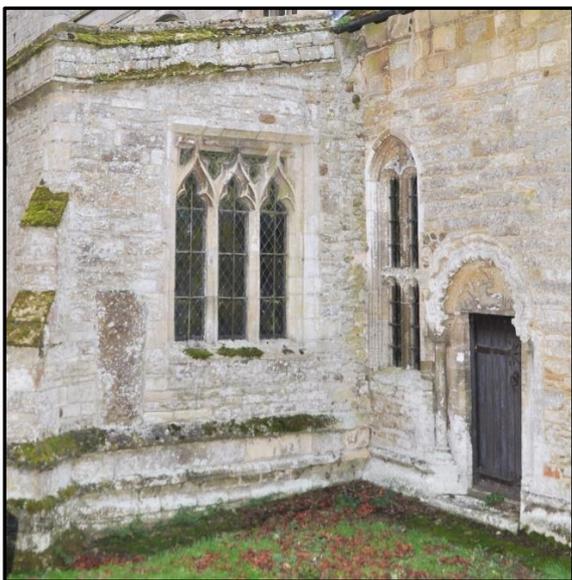
. . . and, as one might expect, signs of the window are also visible *inside* the chancel.



This close up gives us a rather better view of the extraordinary appearance of the wall of the north aisle. It is a hotchpotch of repairs using various styles and materials - each one adequate on its own but exhibiting total indifference to holistic continuity.

The lower right part of the wall is C13 and constructed from pebblestone rubble of which many of the pebbles are dark brown suggesting a high iron content. The rest of the wall is made from coursed rubble; the window is C14. The buttresses are C15 and are of oolitic limestone which might have come from Barnack like the stone used in the buildings discussed in the previous two issues of *The Botolphian*. Barnack lies only 21 miles to the north of Stow Longa.

**Now to the colours:** My first thought was that these were due to lichens but I became side-tracked by the idea that oolitic limestone often contains Ferric Oxide and this made me wonder if the phenomenon was caused by red haematite leaching out of the ashlar in some areas - and yellow limonite in others. In my defence, the ferric oxide might indeed be having some effect but I eventually returned to my conclusion that it is the lichens which are the primary cause of the colouration.



I was unable to photograph the eastern end of the church because of the proximity of the trees, so here we have come back round the church to the south side where we find an interesting corner. This is the angle between the C14 east wall of the south chapel (on the left) and the C13 south wall of the chancel (on the right). The former has, built into the wall, a dark-coloured slab which is said to be a coffin lid dating to c.1300. The records say that there are several other similar pieces but I could not find them. The doorway on the right hand side of the picture is the aforementioned 'priest's door' which we will discuss later. The next photograph shows the top edge of the coffin lid.



This has a deep infestation of white, yellow and grey lichens. What we cannot now see are the *foliate crosses* and *double omega ornament* which were recorded in 1936. These have become obscured by the lichens - never (presumably) to be seen again.

Returning to the 'interesting corner,' this next picture is of the renowned 'priest's doorway.' Dated at C12, it leads directly into the chancel and is the oldest part of the church.

This is reminiscent of St Botolph's Church, Barton Seagrave where there is a similar style of tympanum but with a different central character and different beasts.



Above is a carved tympanum which features a straight-haired mermaid centrally - having a beast on her west side (some say it is a crocodile but it looks much more like a wolf to me) and another on the east side said, from the attitude of its foreleg, to represent a lamb.



Both tympana are thought to date from C12 although the Barton Seagrave version is perhaps a little older than the one at Stow Longa. It has been suggested that the priest's doorway might have changed location and originally have been sited as the main doorway into the church and that today's main south doorway came from elsewhere.



The font consists of a C19 octagonal bowl resting on parts of two C13 circular capitals and has a moulded base. It was once fixed to the western face of the westernmost of the nave's south columns. In this and later pictures you will notice that Mother Nature has persisted in her attempts to colour the *inside* of the church as well as the outside and it seems that she has chosen algae as her medium. This would suggest that the church is damp and poorly ventilated although I cannot recall noticing any musty smell which would support this.



A chat with the Vicar, Revd Stephen Bowring, finally solved this mystery for me. Apparently, in the fairly recent past, the nave floor was re-concreted. This was beautifully done but the only escape it left for the underlying moisture was up the penetrating structures such as the columns and the font. This is such a shame when something like this is done with the best will in the world but it ends up with two steps forwards and one step back.



The oak rood screen dates from late C15 when there also used to be a rood loft. The screen was taken down in 1880 for repair and re-erected three years later.



The altar, hidden here, is modern but records tell us that it incorporates five panels of C17 carving. Apparently there also used to be a gradine (a shallow wooden step at the back of the altar to raise the candles into a better position) and a reredos but these have now been removed. The east window is C15.



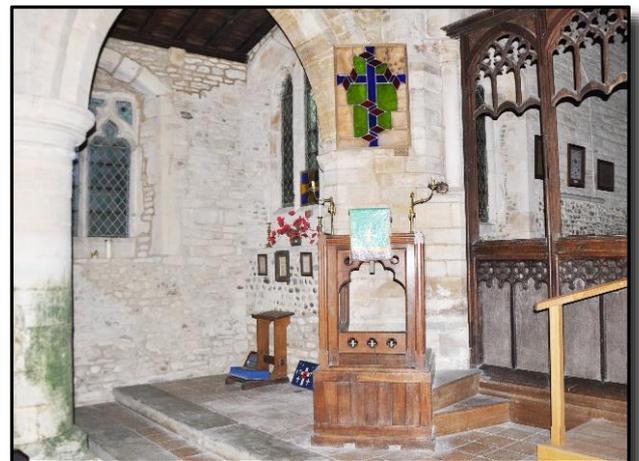
Above and to the right of the piscina, a C13 capital has been built into the east wall. There is another on the opposite side of the altar.



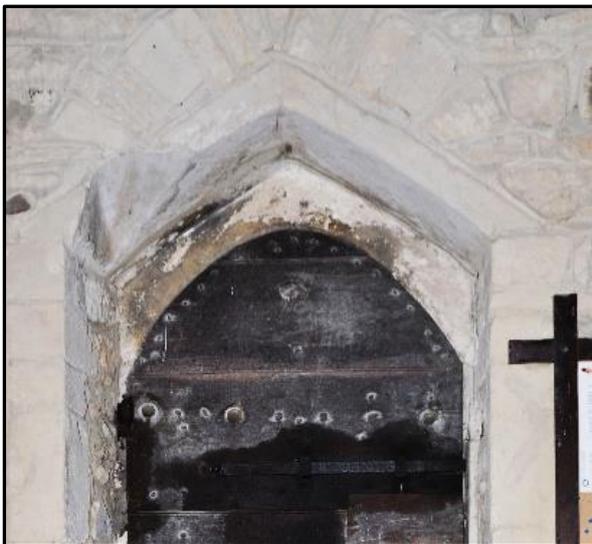
From the outside one can see the repeat of the two-centred round arch visible inside. This suggests that, rather than this originally being a Saxon doorway to which the round arch has been added, it is the inverted-V lintel which has been added inside (perhaps in C15?) to support the C13 arch.



Looking back into the nave, above is a view to the northwest showing the C13 northern aisle with its (rarely-used) north door.



A view of the east end of the north aisle and the open pulpit on the right.



The door itself is clearly ancient but it is the archway above which is most interesting - being



The C14 Lady Chapel, with its C14 piscina, abuts the C13 south aisle.



Tucked away in the northwest corner is the C16 parish chest.



... and another on the southwest angle ...



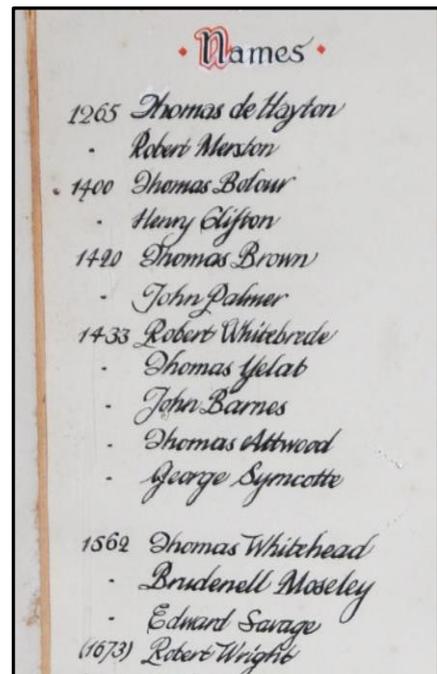
A view up into the bell tower - and still the algae persist on the walls. There is only one bell and it is inscribed *Sancte Petre ora pro nobis*. It bears the stamp of Henry Jordan, bellfounder 1442-1468.



... and a rather unusual crocketed cross at the apex of the eastern end of the nave roof.



And ... just taking one more look around outside before departing, there is one grotesque gargoyle on the northeast wall angle ...



The first recorded 'perpetual curate' of Stow Longa was Thomas de Hayton in 1265 but it seems likely that the church was in existence 200 years earlier than this.

### Stow - the name.

I have no doubt that there are some that I have missed but the map below shows eleven UK locations that bear the prefix name of 'Stow.' There are of course others which use the word as a suffix - like Chepstow and Padstow . . . and Bristol which was originally called 'Brygstow.' There is also another 'Stow' just south of Edinburgh.



The significance of the name (which seems to have been coined in Saxon times) is that it means 'meeting place' or 'holy place.' Of course this does not mean that the holiness of the ground to which they refer dates from Saxon times too. The sites of many Anglo-Saxon churches were so chosen because they were places which had been used for pagan worship for hundreds if not thousands of years previously.

It occurs to me that most of these 'stows' are on St Botolph's patch. This could be an indication that this area has always been religiously fertile, or it could be that it was only in this region that the word 'stow' was colloquial.

All the C19 maps which I have studied record the name of the village as *Long Stow*. It had however been known as *Stow Longa* between C13 and C17 and this was the name to which it reverted in 1958. From C11 the name of the eastern part of the parish was *Estou*.

### Botolphian connections

Although, of the eleven 'Stows', only two sites have churches dedicated to St Botolph, there are two others which are 'suspicious' - firstly *Stow-cum-Quy* - which lies only a mile away from the ancient village of *Bottisham* over which I have been hovering hawk-like for some time hoping (by virtue of its name, position and cultural associations) to be able to claim it as '*Botolph's home*.'

The second is *Stow Bardolph* in Norfolk of which the suffix is known to be a late addition referring to the C13 Lord Bardolph (d.1275) of Wormegay Castle. It might not be coincidental that Lord Bardolph's wife was the daughter of William de Warenne the 3rd Earl of Surrey, whose family owned the estates which surrounded Stow Longa forty miles to the southeast. Wheels within wheels!

### Comments

The 1936 *History of the County of Huntingdon Volume 3 (Victoria County History)* describes many features of this church which are now no longer visible and this makes me think that this church is deteriorating quite quickly. It would appear that this is due to retained dampness both inside and outside the church. Some of this must be caused by the church sitting on impermeable clay and nothing can be done about that but one wonders if cutting the trees back - particularly from the east end of the church - might improve ventilation. In the final analysis it all comes down to finances of course and I guess those are just not available.

So why would this church have been built here and why is it dedicated to Saint Botolph?



The clue to the answers of both questions would seem to be in its location right in the middle of the 'wool catchment area' for Boston. It is likely that the de Warenne family would have built the church for the benefit of their workers and dedicated it to Saint Botolph because he was the saint who, by then, had become traditionally associated with the success of Boston's trade.

### Landowners in the area

William de Warenne 1st Earl of Surrey, d.1088  
 William de Warenne 2nd Earl of Surrey, d.1138  
 William de Warenne 3rd Earl of Surrey, d.1148

Isabel de Warenne Countess of Surrey, d.1203  
Hamelin de Warenne 4th Earl of Surrey, d.1202  
William de Warenne 5th Earl of Surrey, d.1240  
John de Warenne 6th Earl of Surrey, d.1304  
John de Warenne 7th Earl of Surrey, d.1347  
Richard FitzAlan 10th Earl of Arundel, d.1376

**Hanseatic trade** with Boston was from 1150 to 1450 with its better years in the last half of that period. This ties in nicely with the dates for this church which would, in those circumstances, have been overseen in its early days by the 3rd Earl of Surrey and then by his daughter the redoubtable Isabel de Warenne.

### **Classification**

A Class C church founded as a result of commercial enterprise.

Having said this, - as I mentioned in the last issue of *The Botolphian*, it seems that, for the last few years of his life, our saint regularly undertook the 200 mile journey between Icanho in Suffolk and Much Wenlock in Shropshire. As shown by the map above, the route passes close to or through a particularly large number of 'Stows'. There is little doubt that Stow Longa church was founded as a 'Wool church' in C12 but the nagging question remains: 'Was the new church founded on a site which had previously been occupied by a wood-and-thatch Christian field chapel? I am convinced that Botolph, like St Paul, would have preached regularly on those cross-country journeys. Stow Longa was directly on his route. Might he have managed to convert the pagans of Stow Longa in, say, A.D.673? Sadly we will never know for certain.

### **Technicalities**

For those with an interest in the technicalities of Stow Longa's harlequin appearance, David Watt of [www.buildingconservation.com](http://www.buildingconservation.com) writes:

**'Lichens** are a symbiotic association of photosynthetic micro-organisms held in a mass of fungal hyphae, with growth in various shrub-like, leaf-like or encrusting forms. The photosynthetic partners are typically unicellular or filamentous **green algae or cyanobacteria**. The fungus usually gives the lichen its overall shape and structure, with the algae or cyanobacteria present just below the lichen surface. In such a symbiotic relationship, the algae provide carbon compounds, the cyanobacteria fix nitrogen and provide organic nitrogen, and the fungi provide a suitable environment for growth. The hyphae retain moisture and minerals, and the fungi secrete acids that aid the uptake of minerals.

**Algae** are 'protists', a photosynthetic, plant-like organism that is not a plant, animal or fungus. Most protists are unicellular, although some are colonial or multicellular. The largest and most

complex algae are brown and red algae, which include many species commonly known as seaweeds. Green algae are closely related to land plants and are divided into two main groups - chlorophytes and charophyceans. Chlorophytes may live symbiotically with fungi as lichens. Treatment includes eliminating sources of excess moisture and removing surface growths.'

So there we have it. There is more to *The Botolphian* than simple church architecture!

### **Thanks**

It was a long time ago - right back in February 2014 - when I visited this church. I would like to repeat my thanks to Christine Hayes for showing me round. I think I will soon have to make another visit because Christine tells me that built into the wall of the chancel is a Saxon cross shaft which sounds excitingly like the one that was found at Iken. Sadly it did not show on my photographs.

### **Do we have bats in the belfry?**

I also spoke recently to Daniel Hayes, Christine's son, and he told me the sad story that the church, having managed to win a grant to repair the roof, had to spend several thousand pounds on a survey which revealed the presence of a bat. This has resulted in the erection of expensive scaffolding inside the church pending investigations. It seems that even the mummified remains of bats are protected by our laws. There is now a danger that, because of the presence of the bat, the grant for the roof repair could be lost.

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### **Correspondence**

**1. Dorothy Halfhide** from Thorney wrote a delightful email in response to last month's church feature and supplied the following information:

"Thorney Abbey is open during the day at all times, so collecting a key is not necessary. Please add the link to [www.thorney-museum.org.uk](http://www.thorney-museum.org.uk) to your list, as this is the one which is better for historical links. I think the Abbey site you have used is outdated, and this is the current one:

<http://www.wherecitymeetsfen.org.uk/> - it will allow people to be updated about forthcoming events at the Abbey.

I was really intrigued to see your comment about looking for St Botolph on the West Front. I have so far drawn a blank in finding out which saints we have apart from Christ and St Tatwin, but I really hope to find someone who can help with the identification one day.

Re your comment on the blocked up openings at the Clerestorey level - I believe these to be remnants of the top row of church windows, rather

than doors. I think they work if interpreted that way?

I think that most of your summary of the church's form is really good and concise. I would mention that the East Window doesn't exactly copy one from Canterbury but is actually made up of roundels copied from work at Canterbury.

We would be glad to welcome people to Thorney, and given time to arrange it we can often open the Museum or even to a quick tour of the Abbey and village (in the hope of donations to the Abbey and the museum)." Many thanks Dorothy.

**2. Anne Pegg** wrote:

"Thank you for the latest Botolphian - always something of interest and it means you and Zina are never stuck for a new goal. Long may you continue! My second printing of '*Barton Seagrave: Village, Church and People*' is now available. There is updated information about the building and a section - well-known to you - on St Botolph. People have received it with enthusiasm. If you would like a copy, it costs £10 + £2.00 p&p. I wish you very well with the third of your Botolph trilogy and look forward to its appearance. I haven't yet got round to reading the Abbess volume - life is so busy for us oldies, isn't it?"

Thank you Anne - all comments much appreciated - I shall be ordering my copy of BSVCP shortly.

**3. Phillip Buttolph, Andree Sladden and Sid** also wrote with some kind and interesting comments - thank you.

**4. Patricia (Crocky) Croxton-Smith** from St Botolph's Hadstock wrote in reply to some questions I had asked her:

"First, may I point out that the "royal" i.e. 1020 parts of the Church are also Barnack stone with the flints. It was the nearest stone in this area and could have come part of the way by water, which would have been cheapest. According to Warwick Rodwell, the 1020 Church is built over an earlier building, seen in lower parts of the Nave walls, N. Transept walls and by foundations at the crossing found on three sides from the Transepts and Nave, leaving only a narrow archway in the centre (as in earlier Saxon buildings). We have seen these again as, last Sept. work started on stripping and then replastering the lower walls, making a walkway in the Nave roof so that it could be inspected properly."

Crocky suggested I put off my idea of re-visiting the church until later in the summer by which time the work will be completed.

**5. Sue Jones, Robert Walker and Peter Holliday** from Leominster have been doing their best to provide me with information about the origins of their *St Botolph's Green*. It seems likely that Leominster, lying halfway between Much Wenlock and St Botolphs at Hanley Castle, has growing potential as a Botolph site. Peter

Holliday sent me a section of Leominster's Edfrid Legend in which is written: *This message "Edfride did wnfoulde to Botholl a religious man."* Another piece of the jigsaw?

**6. Simon Young** the BBC's Commissioning Editor for History Programming gently declined my offer of writing a programme along the lines of **Michael Portillo and his Great Train Journeys** but instead featuring Saint Botolph walking the beautiful countryside between Icanho and Much Wenlock investigating half a dozen or so of the churches which remain today.

He wrote: "It's a fascinating idea, but I'm afraid I have limited capacity for these sorts of journeys across the British landscape, and so I'm afraid I wouldn't be able to progress this idea. But thank you so much for sending it in." A gentlemanly reply I thought!

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Please do not hesitate to write to me or send an email to [botolph@virginmedia.com](mailto:botolph@virginmedia.com) if you have any alternative views to those expressed in *The Botolphian*. It is good to engender some controversy from time to time!

#### **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](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 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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