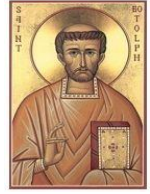




The Botolphian

Newsletter of
The Society of Saint Botolph

www.botolph.info



The Saint Botolph icon above is copyright © Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Brookline, MA and used by permission. All rights reserved.
Admin: Denis Pepper, 17, Cliffe House, Radnor Cliff, Folkestone, Kent, CT20 2TY. Tel: +44 (0)1303 778-778. Email: dp@botolph.info
President: Revd Timothy L'Estrange, Vicar of St.Gabriel's Church, North Acton.

Issue Number: 105

Now published every other month

17th June 2023

Highlights this month

- **Scandinavian Connections**
- **Welcome to new members Ria Lacey and Carol Harte from 'Write by the Sea' in Folkestone.**

Editorial

A very happy (but now rather belated) Saint Botolph's Day to you all.

The Botolphian is so late this month that it seemed to make sense to publish it on this the most prestigious day in the Botolphian Calendar. I must admit that even that was a struggle but I must reassure you that there is nothing sinister in the delay – it is simply a matter of too many things happening at once in my life – amongst them being installation of scaffolding, finding and dealing with roofing contractors and painters and various other unconnected scenarios; a case of there being insufficient hours in the day – or perhaps my biting off more than I can realistically chew.

Last month, I went to the London Book Fair at Olympia in an attempt to interest publishers in my *Voyages around Saint Botolph Churches Volume I*. I had limited success as the fair was not designed as a medium for authors to communicate with publishers, but for publishers to communicate with booksellers in the hope of interesting them in filling their retail bookshelves with great swathes of their products. The people on the stands therefore were generally not

editorial staff (which was more in line with what I was looking for) but *sales* staff - who were, nevertheless, very helpful.

On the night before I travelled up to London I had printed out all 350 pages of my Volume I, and bound it with cotton thread in proof-copy fashion and on the twenty or so occasions when I was granted an audience I found it very useful to be able to 'plonk' it down in front of the luckless sales person as I launched myself into my sales pitch.

-0-

Nanoushka Myrberg Burstrom¹ (from Sweden) kindly responded to my recent appeal to '*our academic Scandinavian readers*' for information regarding the date at which the name or *akanym*² of Botolph first appeared in their region.

Dear Denis,

Thank you for the always interesting Botolphian. In response to your call for the oldest witness of the name Botolph, *this academic Scandinavian* quotes:

1. *The rune stone G (Gotland) 80, with the name Botulf incised (1050-80).*

The standard volume *Sveriges Medeltida Personnamn* (Sweden's Medieval personal names) gives names from early documents. The oldest indication of the use of Botulf (Botolph) is as follows:

2. [n.d] (m. 12th C.) *Botulphus, laicus*

3. [n.d] (m. 12th C.) *Botulphus*, priest in Lund

4. [1273] (vid. copy 1432) *Magno Botolphi*,

priest

5. **1287 *Botulpho de Nybili***, testimony to a gift

¹ Nanoushka Myrberg Burström, Senior Lecturer in Archaeology and Ancient Culture at the University of Stockholm, Sweden.

² *Akanym* is a word that necessity has forced me to invent. It means 'also-known-as-name' and covers situations where 'alias' 'sobriquet' and 'pseudonym' are inappropriate. Botolph and Budolfi are akanyms.

6. Also in Gotlandic epigraphy (grave slabs, inscriptions in churches) the name becomes more common during the thirteenth century and **1226** is the earliest recorded instance of a Swedish *Botulf Blunde* (= *the blond?*) appearing in the toll lists of London.

There seems to be no doubt that your English saint is the origin or the name in Scandinavia, but we are not entirely sure why he was so appreciated here.

This is all I can contribute today, I think.
Kind regards, Nanouschka.

-0-

Patron Saints

This seems to be the ideal place to insert some further observations about patron saints.

I was interviewed on our local radio station *Academy FM* a couple of weeks ago in anticipation of a talk I gave the following week to the Folkestone writing group *Write by the Sea*. The subject of my talk was (inevitably): *Writing about Saint Botolph*.

I was first interviewed by the radio presenter, Kay McLoughlin, just before the UK was struck by Covid, but surprisingly Kay could still remember our conversation in detail – as (even more surprisingly) could I. She was keen to follow the line that Folkestone's patron saint, Princess (later 'Saint') Eanswythe, and her contemporary Botolph – having almost certainly met (they were of similar age), probably fell in love.

I was pleased to find that my portrayal of our saint had been so memorable.

In this more recent interview Kay's imagination knew no bounds and she felt that the next stage ought surely be to make a film which could turn into Folkestone's very own *Game of Thrones!*

I felt that this was rather 'on the wild side' and, although I was not too sure about the prospect of our chaste and noble saint cavorting with the opposite gender, I had to agree that it would at least achieve the object of bringing both Eanswythe and Botolph out of the dim and dusty corners of the Dark Ages and into the public domain.

Not yet having received an invitation from Netflix or any other film-maker to write the narrative for such a film I do not have to worry about breaching any ethical codes.

We read constantly that Saint Botolph was the Patron Saint of Travellers. He is also recognised as the Patron Saint of Farmers and of Sailors, but this is where some confusion occurs due to use of the definite article. It seems to me that in most

cases where patronage is discussed we should really be using the *indefinite article*.

Travellers

Today's *turn-to-first* 'authority' Wikipedia tells us that the patron saints of Travellers are: *Bona of Pisa, Botolph, Christopher, James (son of Zebedee), Joseph, Macarius of Unzha and Raphael the Archangel*. This illustrates the point that Botolph was not *the* but *a* patron saint of travellers – because there were lots of them.

Patron saints are selected by venerable tradition or by election and their 'tenure of office' clearly depends greatly upon the location and time referred to. **Botolph was a patron saint of Travellers in Britain between C7 and circa C13** when Saint Christopher took over. In 1969, however, Pope Paul IV removed Saint Christopher from the Roman Catholic list of saints on the basis that there is no firm historical evidence that he ever actually existed. Nothing daunted, the public of the northern hemisphere continue to use his name for intercession for their travel needs and in these circumstances the public verdict is law.

Farmers

Wikipedia lists the patron saints of farmers as being: *Benedict of Nursia, Bernard of Vienne, Botolph, Eligius, Isidore the Farmer, Notburga, Phocas the Gardener, Theobald of Provins and Walstan*. Such evidence confirms Botolph as *a* patron saint of farmers and reminds us again that the appointment is not exclusive; it depends upon where you were and when you were there.

Knowing as much as we now do about our saint, and on the basis of *venerable tradition* we can justifiably claim that he was (and perhaps still is) *the* patron saint of *Sheep Farmers* in eastern Britain during the first half of the second millennium. To this can probably be added a patronage of *Wool Merchants* during the same period.

Sailors

Botolph, Brendan the Navigator, Elizabeth Seton, Erasmus of Formiae, Nicholas of Myra, Peter the Apostle, Maturinus (in Brittany) and Andrew the Apostle (French Canadian voyagers and sailors) are on Wikipedia's sailor's list. In my 53 years of sailing the high seas I have never yet met another sailor who proclaims **anyone** to be the activity's patron saint, let alone Saint Botolph. There is certainly no shortage of prayers from mariners so perhaps, like me, when in a panic the others also routinely use the direct line to God.

In the High and Late Middle Ages however, sailors (especially those following the trade routes) would often have found it expedient to appeal to a higher authority when things became

desperate, and a well-known saint would have been like a trusty friend who could be called upon to intercede with the mysterious Almighty who controlled wind, waves and fog, and in fact everything that made life unpredictable.

Our saint's name would have come easily to the lips of those seamen who had just left the port of **Botolph's Town** (aka Boston, Lincolnshire) on their journey across the German Ocean (aka North Sea) on their way to Scandinavia, carrying sacks of wool (aka Woolsacks) which had been acquired as the result of hard bargaining and great expenditure. If they survived the sea journey this wool, which was the finest in Europe, would fetch a good price in Oslo, Gothenburg, Aalborg, Copenhagen, Bornholm, Gotland, Stockholm or a quantity of places in between. Not only would the scurvy seaman be praying through Saint Botolph for a safe passage, but the ship's owner and skipper would, no doubt, pray through him too in the hope that their large investment would not be lost.

Thus on these routes at this time there is little doubt that Saint Botolph would have been **The Patron Saint of (Scandinavian Trade Route) Sailors**, and indeed, sailors moving around as they do, his name would probably have been carried

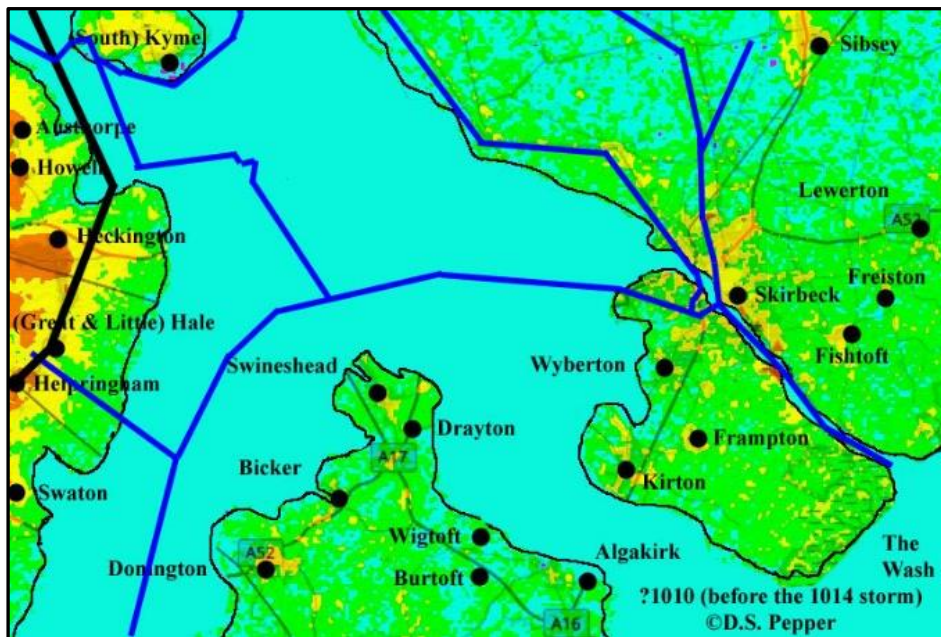
into the Mediterranean and beyond as **A Patron saint of Sailors**. This brings us neatly into *Scandinavian Connections*.

Feature

Scandinavian connections.

This feature is intended as a superficial examination of Saint Botolph's connections with Scandinavia. There is a fair amount of evidence which supports the hypothesis that the Scandinavian connection formed part of the *second phase* of Saint Botolph's cult. There are no indications that he ever visited Scandinavia himself.

Although now is not the time for me to start an in-depth study into the gradual increase of his popularity in these faraway northern climes, the story has to be taken into account since without doing so it would not be possible to fully understand his influence on, and connection with, the medieval ports of Britain's eastern seaboard – in particular of course, the Lincolnshire port of Boston..'



This map is a conjectural illustration of the situation before the massive storm of 1014 totally changed the topography, silting up the wide gap between Algakirk and Kirton and forcing the water to find a new route by widening the channel at Skirbeck.

RECAPITULATING ABOUT BOSTON

Looking back at issue 95 of *The Botolphian* (August 2021) I wrote:

1. 'Boston itself did not rise to any prominence until after 1014 and
2. St Botolph's Church (aka 'The Stump') was not founded until 1309.

With these late dates it is clear that we have entered the second phase of our saint's history. The two phases (the first being his C7 lifetime) are joined by a slender thread - and that thread is his importance as the patron saint of wayfarers and farmers.

Markets, fairs, churches and chapels dedicated to his name were already well established on the eastern side of Britain when the great wool trade made its dramatic debut in about 1240. Indeed it was in the churchyard of the little church at the crossing of the River Witham that the annual traditional St Botolph fairs began to be held in earnest starting on 17th June and extending for several days. The date that the first one was held is anybody's guess. The first might easily have been before the 1014 storm when there was but a beck to cross.'

The original church of Skirbeck

Botolphian issue 95 continues:

'In his article *'Where was the Original Church of Skirbeck?'*, Neil Wright suggests what seems to me to be a likely scenario that the site where the 'Boston Stump' stands today was at or close to the original Skirbeck Church of St Botolph, built a mile or so to the north east of the town as a 'Travellers' church' at the crossing of the Witham stream that ran between the mainland and what we might call Frampton Island.

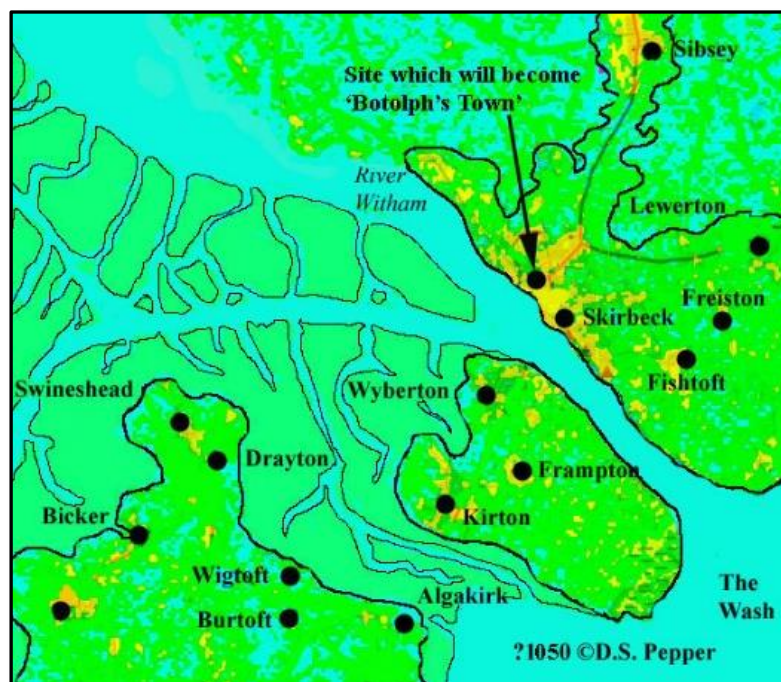
British History Online expands this by writing: *The monastery, which was erected on the north side of the present church, was destroyed by the Danes in 870, and its remains have been converted into a dwelling house, styled Botolph's Priory.* This suggests that the Skirbeck church was built in or soon after Saint Botolph's lifetime and (perhaps in C8) was enlarged by the addition of a monastery – all subsequently being destroyed by the Danes.

Historic England adds the information that: *The origins of St Botolph's Church, Boston have their roots in the former priory church of the Benedictine monastery. The first church of St Botolph was granted to St Mary's Abbey, York, shortly after 1089 and a priory of monks was constituted. The foundations of this first church were discovered during restoration work on the north side of St Botolph's, 1851–3. There is no record of the priory after 1281, and the present church was not begun until 1309.'*

From this it would appear that the remains of the Priory church were reconstituted in c.1089. This would have been 75 years after the storm and the inundation and the Witham would by then have matured into the main river flowing between Lincoln and the Wash.

Development of the settlement north of Skirbeck into Botolph's Town

It seems that it was this settlement, a mile northeast of Skirbeck town, which became known by the wool traders as *Botolph's Town*. Furthermore it seems that it was here on and around 17th June each year that the *Botolph's Fair* was held in the church and churchyard of the old Skirbeck St Botolph's. It would probably have lasted several weeks and would have been the annual focus for sheep farmers to ply their wares much of which would have been in the form of sacks of wool. By 17th June the sheep no doubt would have been delighted to have met their shearers and be relieved at last of their thick heavy winter coats.



This again is a conjectural view illustrating the silting of the Algakirk channel and the wider River Witham running between Lincoln, to the north and The Wash.

Danish monarchs

We are looking here then at about 1050 when Edward the Confessor had been king for only eight years, his predecessors from 1016 to 1042 all having been Danish – Cnut the Great, Harold I and Hardicnut. The beginning of the Danish monarchy coincided with the 1014 storm and if, as looks likely, sheep farming started to take off in terms of it moving from subsistence farming to farming on an industrial scale then it might be that the Danes had some influence on this.

Scandinavia turns to Christianity

It was also the time when Christianity was finally adopted in Denmark and the other Baltic countries.

The Flemish cloth industry takes off

And also a time when the Flemish cloth industry was in the ascendant.

There were several factors which provoked its expansion:

1. More sheep: the Flemish had been engaged in reclaiming the polders and more land meant more sheep and more wool.
2. The horizontal looms had recently been replaced by vertical looms which were three times

faster than the others, and this provoked a surge in the turnover of wool and set in train the need to purchase more. The finest, it was discovered, came from the fleece of English sheep.

Weaving became a profitable industry and the Flemish were good at it. Until C11, any exporting had only been carried out on a small scale. Cloth broke the mould when it was found that it could be produced in high quantities. The Flemish were skilful weavers and foreign demand was high. The ports of the North Sea and the Baltic were the most popular trade partners because of their easy access by sea. As the cloth centres in Bruges and Ghent started to expand rural spinners, weavers and fullers flocked to them seeking to make their fortunes.

The trade took off in mid C11 from these humble beginnings in Flanders, and it seems that *Botolph's Town* – the little settlement on the outskirts of Skirbeck with its accommodating St Botolph's Church, churchyard and priory was one of the first places that the Flemish chose to deal with when they searched for new and better quality wool.

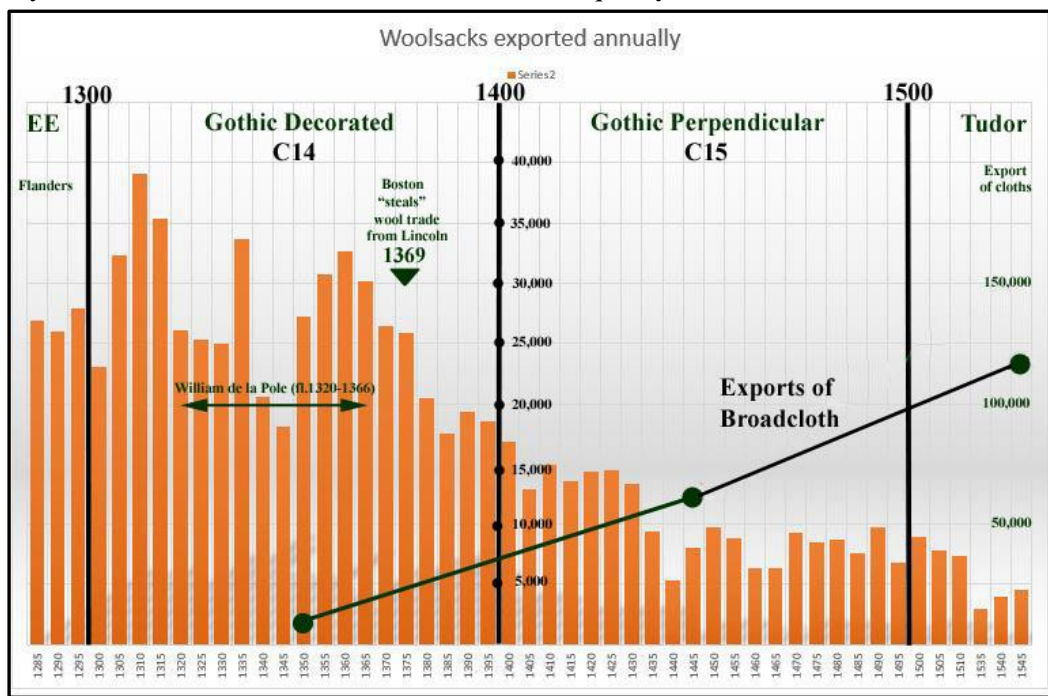


Chart produced from figures obtained from: Munro, John H. (2003b). "Medieval Woollens: The Western European Woollen Industries and their Struggles for International Markets, c. 1000–1500". In Jenkins, David (ed.). *The Cambridge History of Western Textiles. Vol. 1.* Cambridge University Press. pp. 228–324.

By 1309 when the building began of the massive cathedral-like St Botolph's Church that we see today and lovingly call the 'Boston Stump' (on account of its tower's lack of a spire) the settlement had enjoyed 259 years of profitable wool trade; the settlement had grown into a town

the name of which was now pronounced as 'Boston'; and the great profits that had accrued demanded a fitting tribute in the form of the aforementioned structure.

But it seems likely that it was from the earlier smaller Saint Botolph's church on the outskirts of

Skirbeck that the second phase of his cult developed. As you will see from the chart below, once ‘fired-up’ the export of sacks of wool progressed apace with Boston firmly in the lead. The town’s fortunes were given a boost when, in 1369, due to the northern part of the River Witham silting up, the metropolis of Lincoln had to yield its share of the market to Boston.

Strong and charismatic landowners like William de la Pole were leading the trade and the Hanseatic League seemed to have been helping and hindering in equal measure.

In C14 Edward III (1327-1377) decreed that whilst in council his Lord Chancellor should sit on a woolsack to accentuate and remind those present that the fortunes of the country were built on wool. This was evidenced by the rash of ‘wool churches’ which were built as landowners ebulliently flaunted their new opulence and manipulated their money towards entitlement to privileges for themselves and their families in the after-life.

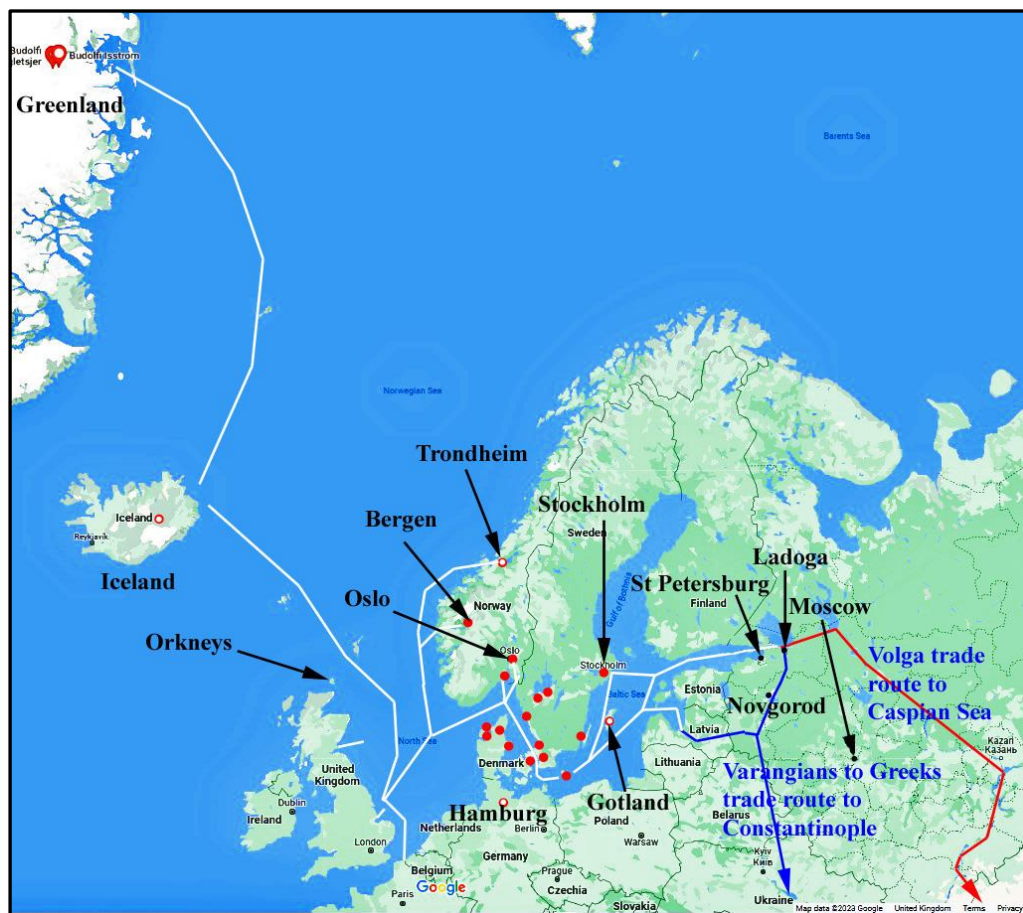
Wool exports gradually gave way to cloth exports but we need go into this matter no further here since the purpose of this section is to provide the background picture of the situation which led to Saint Botolph’s veneration in Scandinavia.

Veneration in Scandinavia

It is hard to say exactly *when* Saint Botolph’s influence started to be felt in Scandinavia – in the same way that it is difficult to tell exactly when the attitude of the Danes (aka the Vikings) changed from one of total aggression to gradual conciliation. In both circumstances it is conceivable that it was King Alfred and Guthrum’s Treaty of Wedmore in 878 that marked the watershed when these changes started to occur.

A consequence of the treaty was that Guthrum, former commander of the Danish Summer Army, became a Christian and acquired the baptismal name of Athelstan.

It would be more than a century before his native country followed that example and accepted the same creed but ‘Saint Botolph’ would have been a household name to those who lived within the Danelaw and their regular commute across the North Sea would have sown the seeds of our saint’s praiseworthy name into Scandinavia even from this early date. Ultimately we find evidence of the spread of his reputation covering a wide area as can be seen from the map below.



Northern Trade routes of the Middle Ages, some of which were forged or strengthened by the Wool Trade. Locations in red with a white centre are so marked to indicate a connection with Saint Botolph but there is no evidence of a church ever having been dedicated to him there.

In **Greenland** at 76°19'00.0"N 25°00'00.0"W we find the Bodulfi Glacier.

Wikidata asserts that this undoubtedly refers to our Saint Botolph of Thorney but I have been unable to find any reasoning on this and I suspect it may not be true.

Greenland has a current population of 57,000 and is part of the kingdom of Denmark where memorials to Botolph are well represented so it seems more likely that the name of the glacier is a modern appellation rather than having any connection with the early middle ages wool trade although the latter option should not be entirely discounted.

Iceland was uninhabited before C8, but legend has it that someone by the name of Botolf was one of the earliest settlers together with a group of Irish monks. I can find no record of any Botolph churches there but his name is also mentioned in various Icelandic sagas and dramas e.g. in the *Sword and the Crozier* – by Indridi Einarsson.

His name also features in the legends of the **Orkney Islands**

Bearing in mind the popularity of his name (as Nanoushka has identified) it is not surprising that a great quantity of 'Botolphs' are available in Scandinavia to confuse the issue.

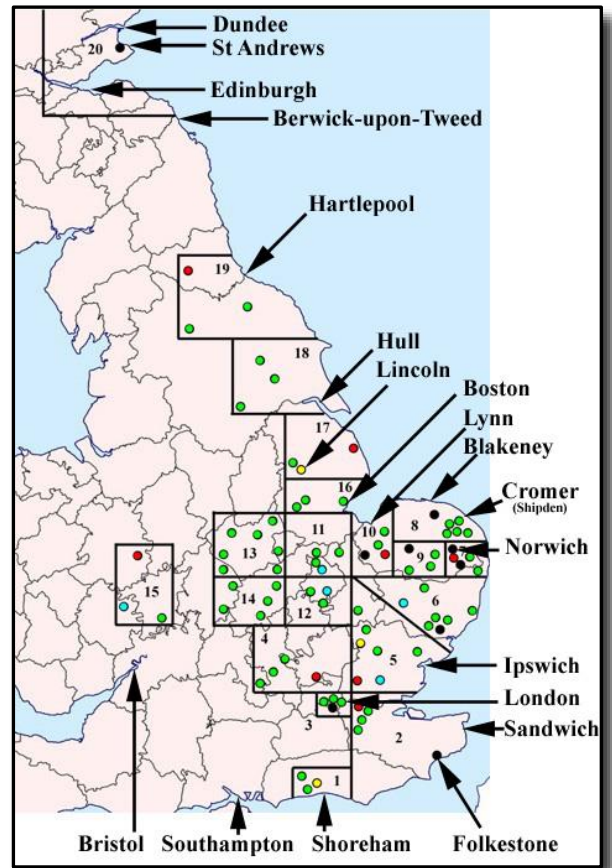
The North Sea routes of the Wool Trade which transported the saint's name did not come to a total halt at the northeastern boundaries of the Baltic but connected with other passageways that ran east as far as China and south to places such as Constantinople and the Caspian Sea. Not being a perishable commodity wool travelled well and a small amount of the British export would have ended up further east than we might have imagined. The same would apply to Saint Botolph's name although I cannot recall it featuring in liturgy of the Russian or Greek Orthodox churches. I am prepared to be corrected on this and I suspect my dear friend Father Pachomius from the Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Brookline USA might be the first to take me to task on the matter. I look forward to his comments.

The whole of the wool trade did not, of course, pass through the port of Boston. London took a great share of it and, as shown below, there were other smaller ports which were also involved in the export of wool.

Many of those arrowed had a close association with a nearby St Botolph's church and it might well be that a high proportion of these churches were built during the wool era.

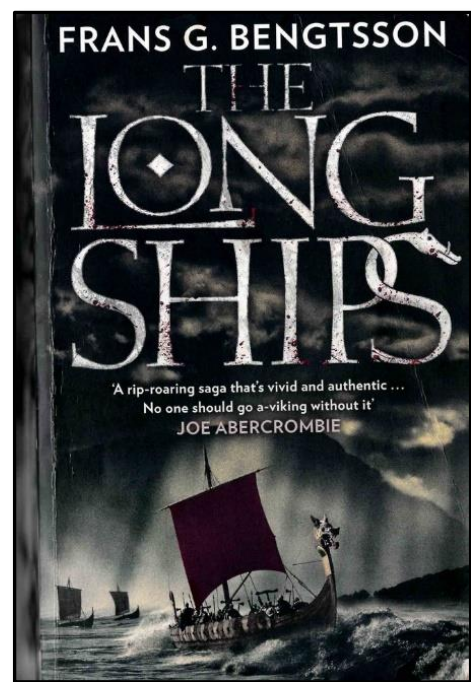
In later days various restrictions were imposed in an attempt to control the trading and 'Staple ports'

were nominated in 1353 but this is not the place to go into this in greater detail.



-0-

A book which I can thoroughly recommend and which serves as an introduction to the full flavour of Viking activities at the turn of C10 and C11, is *The Long Ships* by Frans Bengtsson.



It was recommended to me only recently by my friends Gustaf and Harriet Enholm from Finland where it is regarded as a sailing classic – but it is more than that because it is also of interest to historians as it covers the period when great changes were occurring in Scandinavia as Christianity became accepted.

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 dp@botolph.info saying 'YES PLEASE.' If you wish to UNsubscribe then send the message 'NO THANKS.'

If you wish to purchase any of the books of the Botolph Trilogy please use the same email address.

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*.'

Types of Botolph Church sites:-

The list of classifications I use has been subject to constant revision over the past ten years. The current version, first revised in 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, rivers, 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. Churches roles have always needed to be flexible. The **Type 6** classification takes into account the increased influence of pilgrimage that occurred from late C12.
- * A star is added to the 'Type' when the church lies on a county border.

Changing functionality.

One church will often have fulfilled many roles during its lifetime so a 'type' will often be transient and need to be defined by dates.

Typical Characteristics of early St Botolph Churches.

1. Nearly all are in the eastern half of England
2. Many lie on what today are county borders.
3. Most have Saxon foundations.
4. Many lie within 3 miles of a Roman road or well-used waterway.
5. Most are situated close to the bottom of an escarpment but well clear of water levels.
6. Many are strategically placed in areas which represent the beginnings, middles and ends of long journeys.

Copyright

All rights of 'The Botolphian' newsletters are reserved to Denis Pepper and no items may be copied reprinted or reproduced for commercial purposes without written permission. Readers are however encouraged to copy and transmit the newsletter as long as this is for purely personal use. Folkestone, Kent. 1st May 2013. (Last revision February 2023).