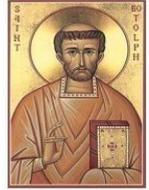




The Botolphian

Newsletter of
The Society of Saint Botolph

www.botolph.info



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

Issue Number: 52

1st August 2017

Highlights this month

- St Botolph's church, Boston, Lincs.
- It gives me great pleasure to welcome Harriet and Gustaf Enholm (from Helsinki) as new members.
- Other than a few emails of good wishes (which I am always delighted to receive) there has been no significant correspondence this month.

Annual Luncheon

As previously announced, this year's Luncheon will be held at 12.30 for 1 p.m. on:

Wednesday 4th October 2017

It will be at the usual venue:

**The Hilton Cambridge City
Centre Hotel.**

*It gives me great pleasure to tell you that the
celebrated historian*

Roy Tricker

will be speaking after dinner on the subject of:

**'Amazing Iken - Botolph's
Holy Place.'**

Those of you who have heard Roy speak before will undoubtedly want to hear him again and those of you who have not yet heard him will afterwards be glad you did not miss the event.

The 3-course meal will cost £30 per head including tea and coffee (I will send menus out shortly) and I would be grateful if you would reserve your place within the next two weeks by sending a cheque drawn in favour of D.S. Pepper

to 17 Cliffe House, Radnor Cliff, Folkestone, Kent CT20 2TY or by paying by Bank Transfer to Dr D S Pepper Nationwide Bank: Sort code 07-02-46, Account Number: 45570161.

***Please let me have your
payment by
Thurs 24th August 2017.***

Many thanks. This is always an enjoyable event which generates a lot of 'Botolphian Fellowship' so I hope you will be able to join us - particularly if you have not been before.

Editorial

Last month's emails produced a greater than usual number of 'bounce-backs' - mainly it seems because 'fsnet' has shut up shop forcing people to change their email addresses. If this affects you then please send me an email from your new address and I will reinstate you on the mailing list.

Church Feature

Boston, Lincolnshire

Approach: *From the south, if you are coming from the London area you will probably drive on the A1(M) and then take the A16 from Peterborough and this makes Boston hard to miss.. After crossing the Witham Bridge turn left*

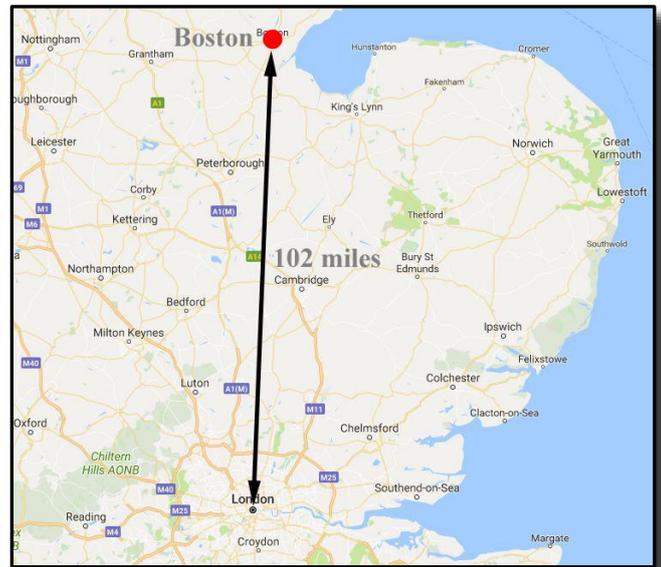
at the next roundabout and keep *The Stump* in your sights until you find a suitable parking place. To be quite honest I have not yet fathomed out the parking intricacies of Boston - more than once I have ended up accidentally driving down the pedestrian precinct to the hostile stares of the locals - so be warned.

Location: Church Street, Boston, Lincs PE21 6NW. 52.978623, -0.025286. TF326441.

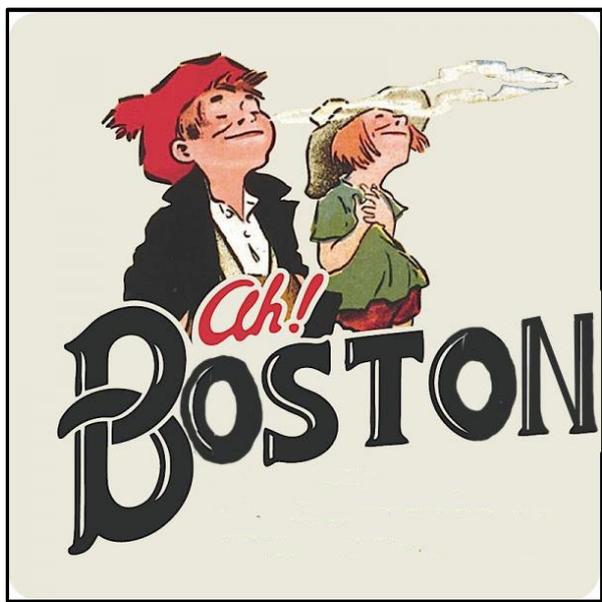
Rector: Revd Alyson Buxton. The Parish Office, 1 Wormgate, Boston PE21 6NP. Tel: 01205 354-670. www.parish-of-boston.org.uk; parish.office@virgin.net.

Services: Sundays 8 a.m. Holy Communion; 1030 a.m. Sung Eucharist; 6 p.m. Choral Evensong.

Listed Grade: I

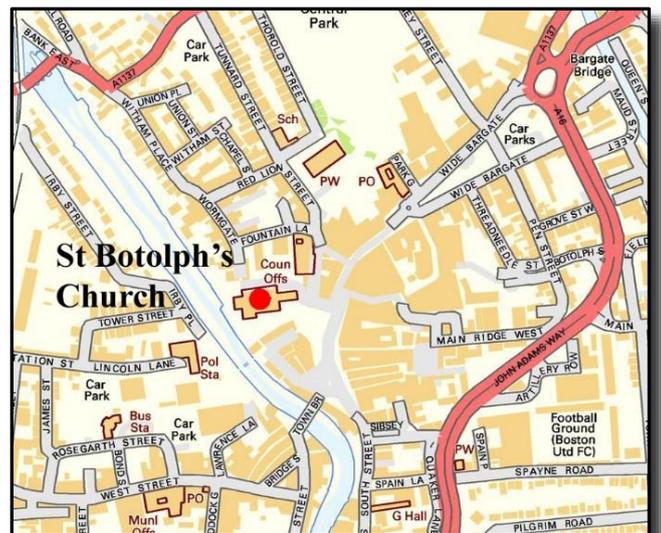


But if she is the queen where does that leave our other celebrity - the little thatched church at Iken that rests on the spot where we believe Saint Botolph's Abbey stood? Well I think we may be forgiven for regarding her as the matriarch who might look benignly across at the younger queen.



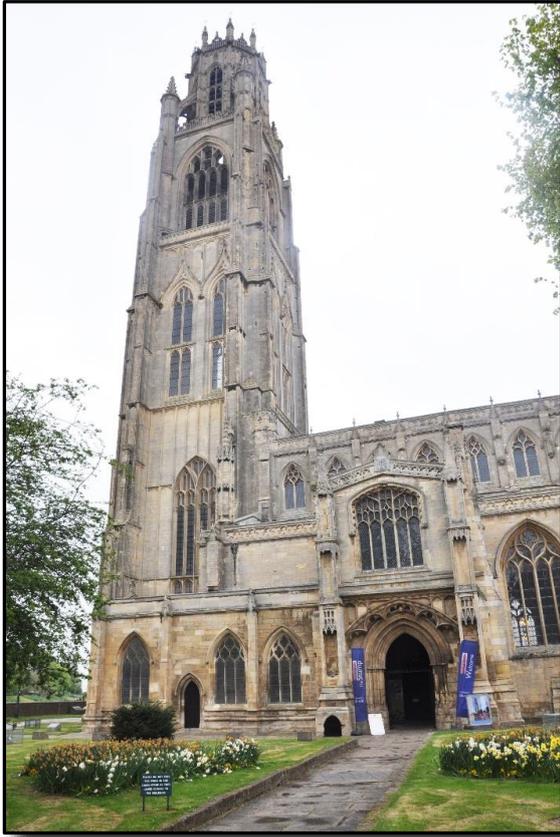
Aaah . . . Boston at last . . . (with acknowledgements to Bisto - the gravy for all meat dishes).

Saint Botolph's Church Boston, Lincolnshire - at last I am paying homage to the Queen of St Botolph's churches. I deliberated for a while as to whether churches were masculine or feminine but in the end I decided that since the name of their main structure, the 'nave,' is said to originate from the Latin word for 'ship' . . . and that all ships are female . . . *Queen* it had to be. And she is of course elevated to this position in the hierarchy because the parish church of Boston is one of the largest parish churches in England and she is undoubtedly the largest church dedicated to Saint Botolph.

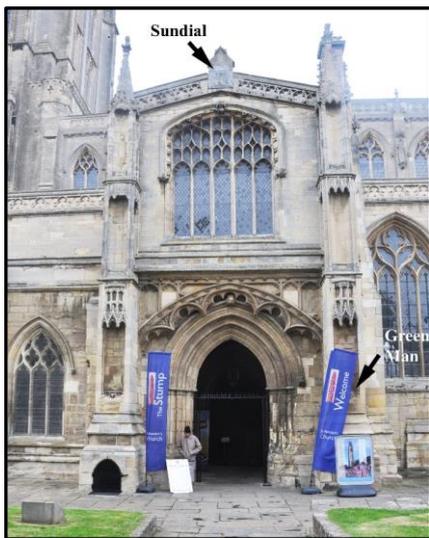


And this will bring us to the question of 'which site - Boston or Iken - was founded first?' because Boston itself was also for many years considered to be the likely site of Icanho Abbey . . . and the debate is not finished yet.

This enormous church took most of C14 to build, starting in 1309 and finishing in 1390 - the tower took an additional 85 years from 1425 to 1510. The building was constructed on the foundations of a Norman predecessor which itself, the guide book tells us, was built on the same site as a Saxon church founded by St Botolph in C7.



As usual the work started with the construction of the chancel and then extended to the south aisle which became the chapel of the Guild of St Mary. In many ways the size and magnificence of the church is a reflection of the affluence of the guilds in C14 for it was during and previous to that period that Boston was the premier trading post of Britain surpassed only by London - and in C13 trade even exceeded that of London. The Guild of Corpus Christi was particularly wealthy and boasted membership of a wide range of British and foreign aristocrats.



Construction of the porch started in C14 but it was another century before the parvise (which now contains the library) was built above it. The two

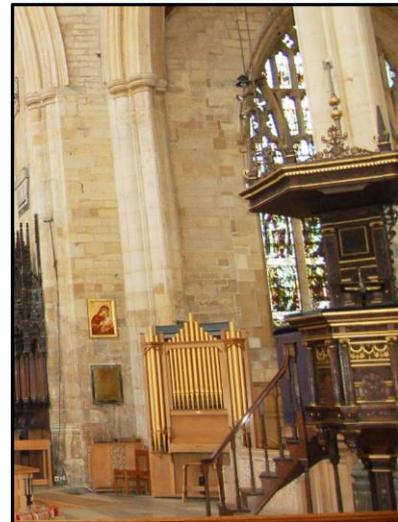
arrows mark, at the top a sundial and on the lower right a sculpture of 'The Green Man,' cunningly hidden behind the blue flag.



Before the Reformation a great rood (cross) used to dominate the eastern end of the nave.



This detail from the left side of first picture shows the door to the rood stairs below and the blocked-up doorway above which gave access to the rood screen.



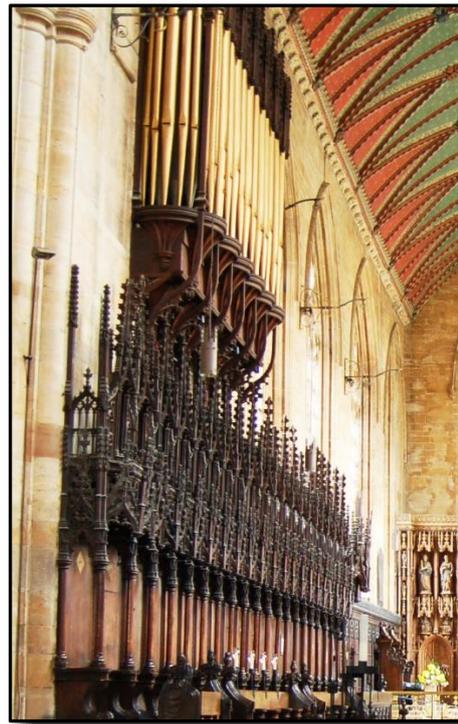
A detail of the right side of the picture shows the pulpit given to the church in 1612 (from which

John Cotton - more of him later - used to preach) and the chamber organ acquired from another local church and installed in 2004.

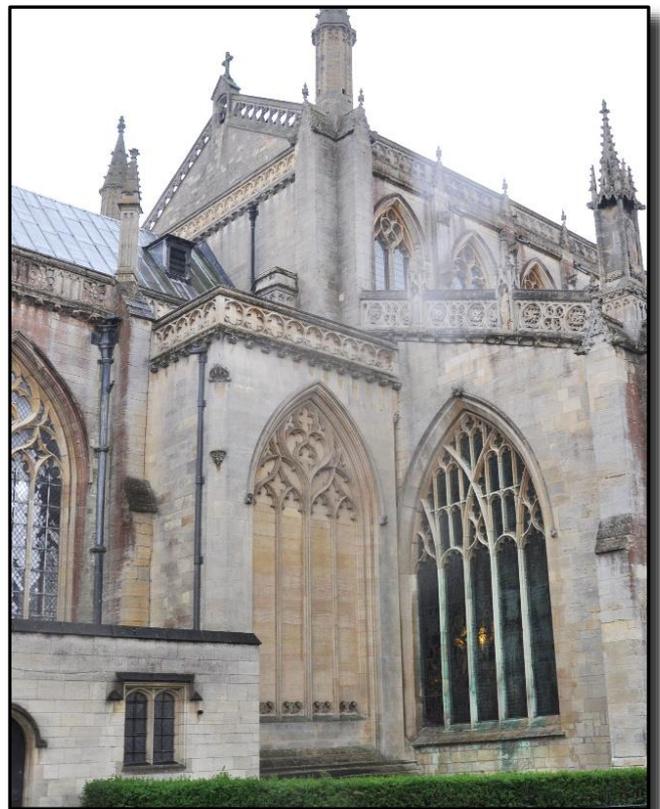
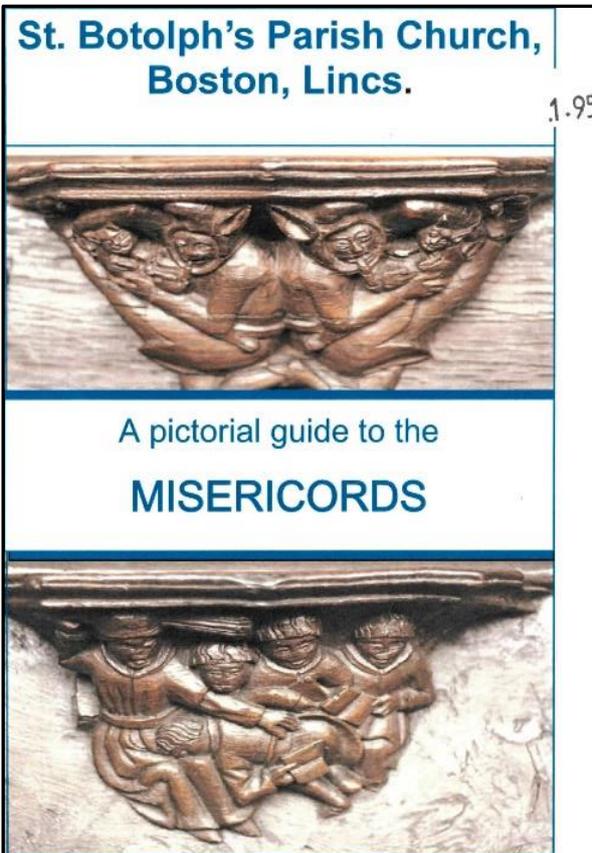


Amongst the choir stalls of the chancel is a superb collection of late C14 finely-carved misericords (the shelf-like seats which serve to support users who have to stand for long periods).

For those with a passion for such things a comprehensive guide is available from the church bookshop for £1.95.



The canopies above the choir stalls are rather later, dating from C19 when the church's organ (first erected on a chancel gallery in 1717) was moved across to the north chancel wall.

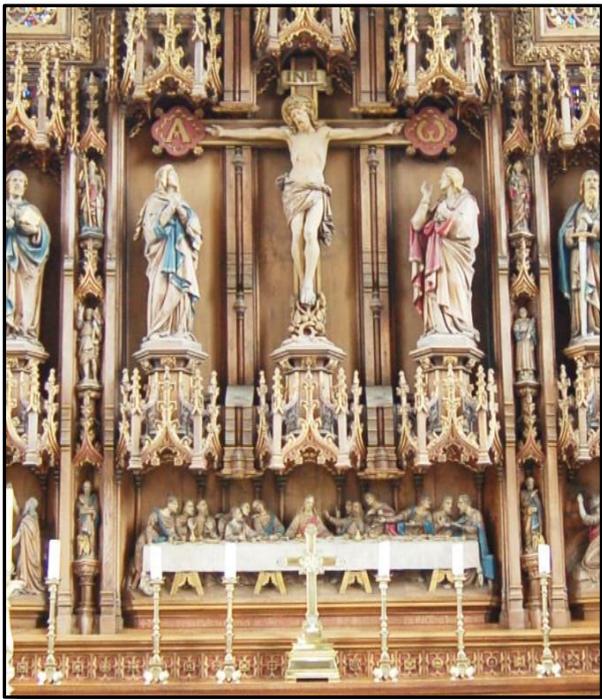


This involved blocking up one of the chancel windows, some of the tracery from which was re-

erected in a cloister of Trinity Church in Boston Massachusetts. (I was competing with what my mother used to call 'Lincolnshire's liquid sunshine' when I took this picture - which is the reason for the raindrop spoiling the photograph).



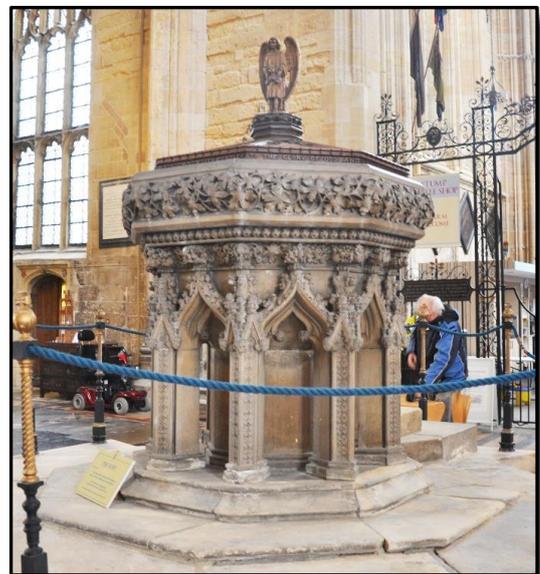
The reredos was installed just before the beginning of WWI in 1914. It is of a complex design incorporating the figures of 57 saints and four scenes from the Old Testament.



In the centre is the Crucifixion scene, below which the Last Supper is depicted.



To the right of the reredos is a 5-seat C19 sedilia. In the past there must also have been a piscina somewhere in this area but the guide books do not mention one - although they do mention an aumbry - but I did not manage to spot this.



The massive Gothic-style font was designed in 1853 by Pugin. It stands at the western end of the nave.



I must admit to finding this church a little puzzling since it claims a C14 construction but it exhibits the Perpendicular style architecture of the following century. It is interesting to note that it bears a considerable resemblance to Antwerp cathedral (and perhaps to that of Bruges) both of which were trading partners during the time of the Hanseatic League - but as Antwerp cathedral is later (started in 1352 and not completed until 1520) I find its Perpendicular style more understandable.



A considerable amount of restoration work took place on this church in the Victorian era and it may well be that this included 'perpendicularisation' of the old C14 windows. This was certainly the case with the east window seen above.



There seems to be a considerable dearth of drawings of this church dating from earlier than 1800 although the library above the south porch has a good collection of later drawings and documents. This lovely picture of 1821 by James Harrison shows the church before its 1845 restoration and its Perpendicular-style design is still evident.

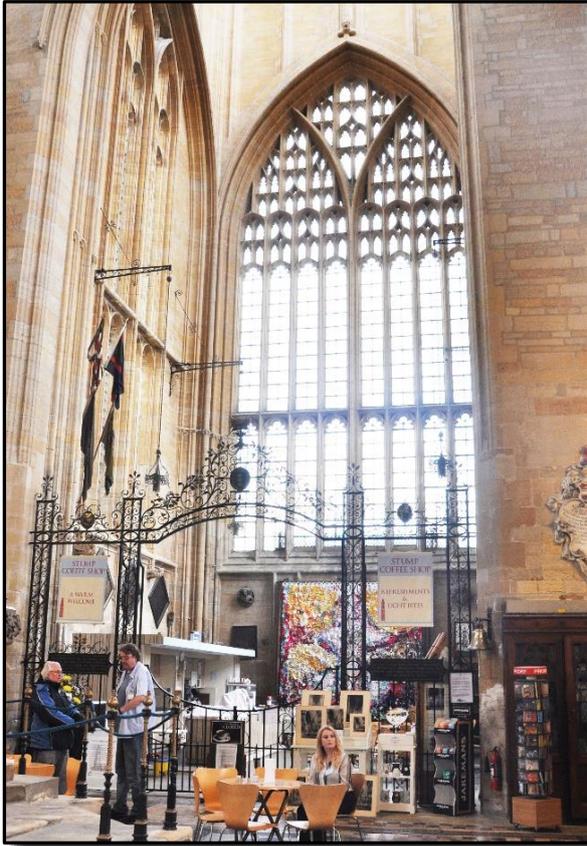
In 1707 William Stukeley wrote, on visiting Boston that the steeple made *an excellent Seamark seen about 40 miles distant*.

The height of the tower is 272 feet and is of course known colloquially as 'The Stump' - perhaps because of its lack of a spire; the fragile lantern at the top of the tower would never be strong enough to support such an extra structure.

During my sailing life when visiting foreign towns I have often noted the efficacy of a spire or dome poking above the rooftops to announce a church's presence to a would-be worshipper.

Once ashore the site of the spire is lost as the traveller threads his way through narrow alleyways - but then comes the sound of the church bells to guide him to the church's very door. Boston's tall steeple has no need of another ten feet of spire to announce its presence.

It has a ring of ten bells and a carillon of fifteen.



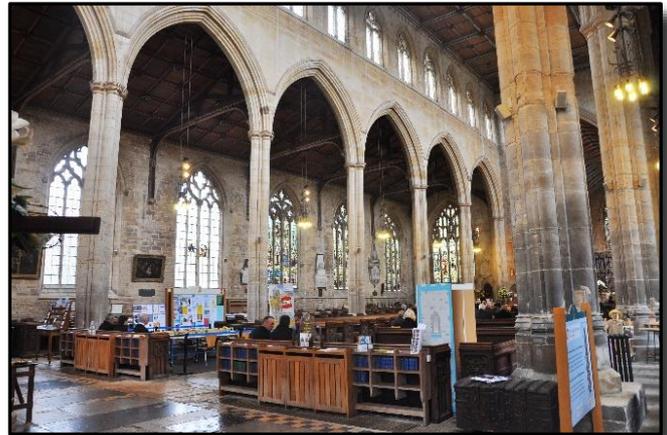
The west window at the base of the tower. The west doorway is obscured by a multi-colour tapestry . . .



. . . and this is the view of the west doorway from outside. Some of the woodwork dates back to C15. The porch itself was moved to its present position when the tower was built. Before that it stood further to the east giving direct access to the nave.



In the walls of the south aisle are tomb recesses containing C14 alabaster effigies - one of a Knight of St John and another thought to be Dame Margery Tilney who laid the foundation stone of the tower in C14. The two bays at the far (eastern) end used to accommodate the Guild Chapel of St Mary.



Behind the camera, in this shot of the nave, is a small door leading to the Cotton chapel which was restored and so-designated in 1857.



John Cotton was the puritan vicar of St Botolph's church from 1612 until 1633 when he sailed to America aboard the *Griffin* to join another group who had sailed three years earlier in the *Arabella*.

Following the Reformation, Boston had gradually become a strongly Puritan town. In 1607 a group led by William Brewster attempted to sail to the Netherlands in the hope of finding greater religious tolerance there. He and the rest of the group were arrested just outside Boston on the grounds that it was illegal to leave the country without the King's permission. The following year they were successful however and spent twelve years in the Netherlands before, in 1620 they sailed in the *Mayflower* to New England and founded the Plymouth Colony.



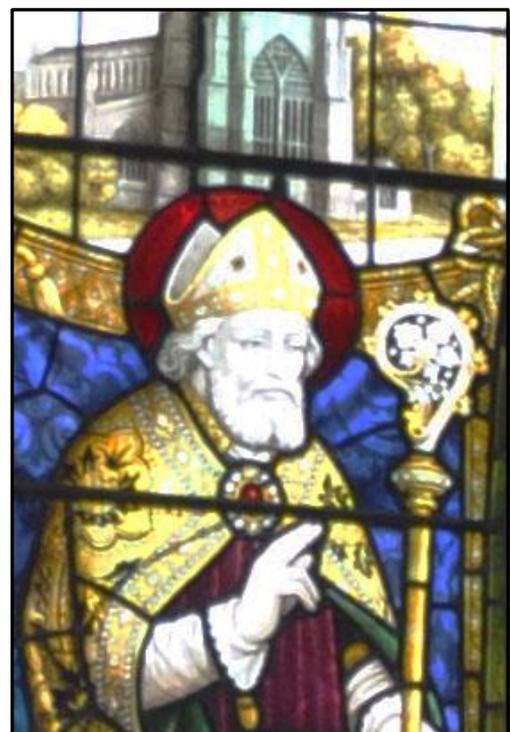
After much deprivation and sickness during the first winter a colony was established at a place called 'Trimontaine.'



A short while later it was renamed 'Boston' in memory of the hometown of the founding fathers. John Cotton was made Teacher of the First Church of Boston and through his influence and others of the 'Boston Men,' the Boston Free Latin School was founded in 1635 (the oldest school in the USA) and, a year later, Harvard University.



Coming back to the Lincolnshire Boston, it is in the west window of the Cotton Chapel that we find a window depicting four saints with their associated churches above them. Reading (unusually) from right to left, we have St Nicholas and his Skirbeck church; St Mary and Lincoln Cathedral; St Francis and the Church of Assisi, and ...



... (perhaps leaving the best until last) St Botolph and St Botolph's Church, Boston. It is always interesting to see an artist's impression of how our saint might have looked. Here he seems

venerable in his old age with a mitre covering the place where his tonsure used to be. He has the appearance more of a bishop than of an abbot but we have seen this many times before; it is said that the mitre and crozier of an abbot differs very little to that of a bishop.

Classification:

The guidebook tells us: ‘Christians have worshipped on this site since the seventh century when St Botolph, an Anglo-Saxon missionary is believed to have preached here.’ As the crow flies, Boston is 90 miles from Iken (if we can accept this as being the site of Icanho Abbey) but this would only have been considered a short distance in the days of C7 when it was not unusual for clerics to travel to Italy and back - so it is not unreasonable to suspect that Abbot Botolph preached here.

As we have seen before, travel by boat would often have been favoured over other means of transport and Skirbeck (as the settlement was probably called before Botolph gave it his name) would have been the first port of call for any East Anglian sailor intent on heading up the (then wide) River Witham to the city of Lincoln - as this conjectural model shows us.



A study of manuscripts such as the *Acta Sanctorum* tells us that both Skirbeck and Lincoln were once strong contenders for identification as the elusive site of Botolph’s Abbey - and here one can see why Boston should have been so considered: a desolate location surrounded by marshes.

Yet, despite its appearance, it was probably *not* so desolate. There would have been a road across the marshes and visits by trading vessels would have been common. By 1086 when the

Domesday Record was taken Skirbeck was rated as ‘very large’ with 42 households and 2 churches.

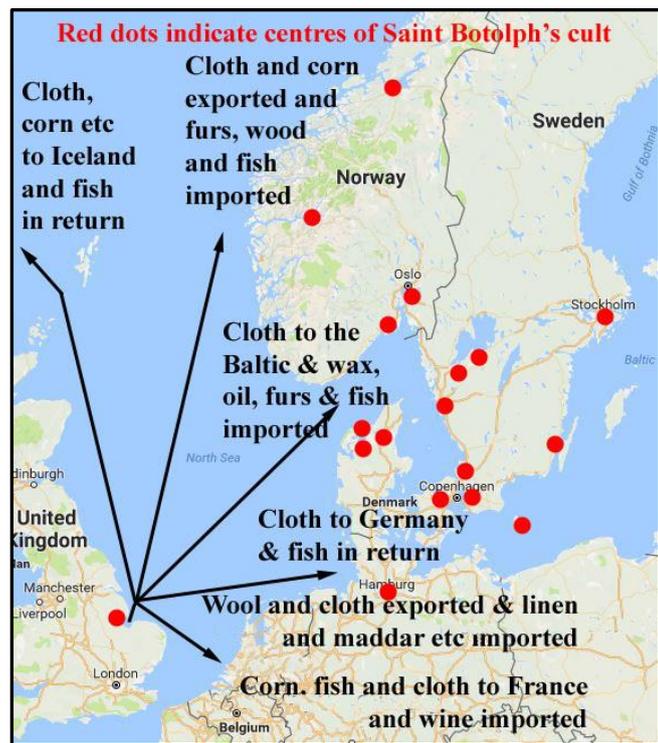
I would think therefore that it is extremely likely that Botolph visited this site and probably founded a small chapel here - or even a monastery.

I would give Boston church an ‘A’ classification, i.e. a C7 site relevant to Saint Botolph’s life.

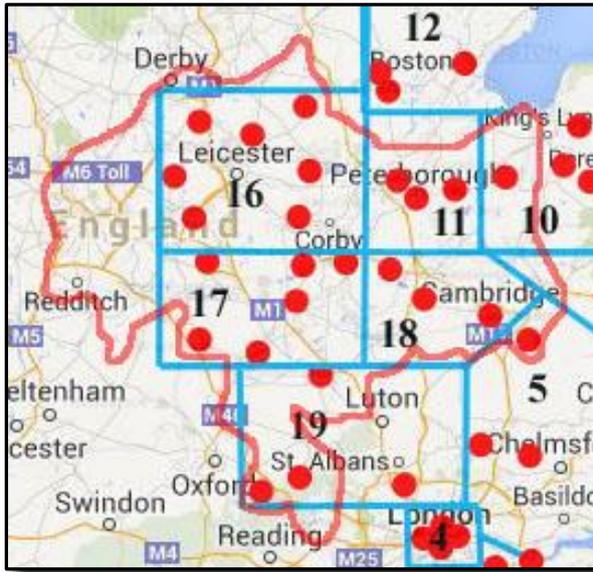
Further comments:

Boston’s influence of course does not stop here because it seems likely that it was this town which worked as a megaphone to broadcast Saint Botolph’s importance far and wide. The saint had already made history by his diligent evangelising to the extent that, after his death, his cult continued to gain momentum.

Nowhere did this become more evident than in Boston where the traders of the Hanseatic League took Saint Botolph to their ample bosoms and spread his name as far east as Iceland, as far into northern Scandinavia as Trondheim and as far west as Stockholm. These at least are the places we know about - but the net might have been cast even as far as the Russian Steppes.



We have seen in our meanderings through Norfolk how the C13 woollen trade brought sudden prosperity to places which became ‘Saint Botolph Communities’ as landowners built churches with their profits and dedicated the churches to our saint.



But Boston's influence also spread far down to the southwest. I apologise for the rather messy map above - but it is a superimposition of one map showing Botolph Churches on another map of the catchment area for Boston's Wool Trade. It illustrates the possibility that those churches might have gained their dedication to Saint Botolph as a result of Boston's wool. It is perhaps no wonder then that our saint was nominated as the Patron Saint of Farmers.

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Please do not hesitate to write to me or send an email to 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 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 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.
- B: 'Travellers' churches.
Bearing in mind that the Danish invasions started in c.800 and continued for 200 years, it seems logical to sub-divide Type B (and perhaps type C) churches into those which appear to have been founded:-
(i) before 800
(ii) between 800 and 1066 and
(iii) after the Norman Conquest.
- C: 'Hanseatic' churches.
- D: None of the above.

Typical Characteristics of Early St Botolph Churches.

1. 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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Folkestone, Kent. 1st May 2013.