



St Botolph's Church

Celebrating the past and present

Peter Coleman continues the series on this historic building and events to commemorate this year's 700th anniversary

Words and Photographs: Peter Coleman and Boston Stump

April will see the opening of the 700 years of History Exhibition in the Nave of St Botolph's Church, Boston. This exhibition has been designed by Lincolnshire based company Insync Design with assistance from Lincoln University and will chart the history of the church from the start of its construction in 1309 until the present day.

Open to the public from the 28th March it will show how a church the size of the Stump came to be built in what is now a small market town. It will also show how the church and town have grown up together, the good and the bad times and what is happening during the present time. The £20,000 costs have been funded by grants from Awards for All, Lincolnshire County Council and Chatterton's Solicitors.

The exhibition will feature six two metre high cut-out figures of the people who have had a major influence on the history of the church and the town. The figures of John Cotton, the vicar who became one of the leading puritan preachers in England and sailed to America in 1630 and together with other puritans founded the settlement that became Boston, Massachusetts, Anne

Bradstreet who became the first American poet and was the first woman to have a book published in the United States, Archbishop Laud who instigated the founding of the churches library and who was beheaded in 1645, St Botolph was a monk who it is said founded the church and after whose name

the town is named. Dame Margaret Tilney a relative of Anne Boleyn who laid the foundation of the present church in 1309 and Jean Ingelow who became one of the first women to make inroads into the male dominated literary world of the nineteenth Century.

These figures will be on display in the Nave and visitors will be able to press a button to listen to them explaining how they have contributed to the history of the church and the town.

In addition, the exhibition will feature a Time Line which will show how the church has developed over the last seven hundred years. Divided into seven sections of one hundred years, each section will be divided into six time lines featuring the Church and Architecture, The Port, People, Trade and History.

Also on display with kind permission of the Bodleian Library at Oxford will be a copy of the Gough Map, one of the earliest maps of the country ever to be produced which featured in a series of television programmes last year. This map illustrates Boston as one of the most important towns in England and adds credence to why such a magnificent church was built in the town.

We have not forgotten the children as there will be a small section of the exhibition where they will be able to find out in their own way how the church was built and the church's relationship with the town. It will cater for all ages and abilities and whilst it is designed to educate it will also be fun to use.

There will be a wealth of information available so whatever your interests are please come along and see why the church became such an important historical building.

Entry to all the above will be free and will be accessible most days, however the exhibition may need to be moved or elements of it removed when certain events are taking place. Unfortunately parts of the exhibition will need to be removed during the Flower Festival because of lack of space.

Also available from the beginning of April will be a booklet designed and printed by the Boston branch of the University of the Third Age. Entitled Behind the Stump the book has been published as part of the church's celebrations. It will take a look at behind the scenes and explain how a church that is the size of a small cathedral can stay open for

seven days a week. It documents the work of the staff and the numerous volunteers who contribute many unpaid hours to help keep open one of Lincolnshire's most iconic buildings.

The church is run like any medium sized business. Insurance, salaries, heating and other costs mean an annual turnover

of over £1 million. It should also be noted that it receives no central government funding and all its income has to be either earned through trading income or through grants and donations.

The book gets to know the church's staff, many of them who work behind the scenes. It will also explore the rich musical tradition under the Director of Music; look at how the shop caters for visitors and contributes to the church's income and how the two full time stonemasons keep the fabric of this famous building in good condition. It will also show how the Friends of the church both in this country and in America contribute to the work of the church. Finally it looks at the Parish Library and how the many volunteers help run what is one of the finest parish libraries in the country. The book will be available from the Festival Office and the Stump Shop and will cost £2.99.

So the past and the present will feature in this momentous year. The church wishes to make this year one for the people of Boston and Lincolnshire to remember for a long time.

So come along and be part of it!

