

# Botolph House



House Feast Day – 17<sup>th</sup> June

Blue

Missionaries

**Who was St Botolph?** He was a local saint and a Missionary. Botolph House is the House of Missionary saints. Blue is your colour because missionaries usually have to travel across seas and oceans to reach other lands. Some missionaries work to spread the faith in their own country and St Botolph did this too.

### **St Botolph of Iken**

Botolph was born of a noble East Anglian family in about 615. After baptism as a child, he probably received instruction from the Irish missionary Fursey who had settled in East Anglia in about 631. It seems that Botolph may have become a monk at St Fursey's monastery at Burgh Castle in the north of Suffolk.

After this Botolph travelled widely. He obtained monastic experience in Sussex and then in northern France. Returning to England, he travelled to both Northumbria and Shropshire. He also spent time in Lincolnshire at the town of Boston, which was named after him and where the local church is dedicated to him. He then came back to East Anglia and in 654 he began building a monastery at Iken near Aldeburgh by the Suffolk coast. A remote spot on the southern bank of the winding estuary of the River Alde, this was an ideal site for monastic life. The thatched church which stands on that site is still today dedicated to St Botolph.

Here Botolph suffered much from evil spirits whom he expelled with the sign of the cross. He gathered a community of monks who cultivated the land, turning desolate marshland into fruitful farmland. Abbot Botolph was revered for his miracles, holiness, gift of prophecy and charity to the needy, always practising what he preached. Taking advantage of the extensive river network in East Anglia, from here he sailed along rivers to do missionary work all over East Anglia, especially in Suffolk, but also to Essex and Kent. Famed as a man of holy life and learning, 'full of the grace of the Holy Spirit', Botolph received the visits of many monks from elsewhere.

A model Abbot, Botolph, wearied by age and care, died on 17 June 680 and was at once revered as a saint. His fame spread all over England and altogether sixty-four ancient churches were dedicated to him. Although the majority of these were in eastern England, there are dedications to him in parts of England, perhaps in remembrance of his travels. Notably all four Gates of the City of London had chapels inside them dedicated to St Botolph. His fame even spread abroad, especially to Holland, northern Germany and Denmark. And by the eleventh century veneration of him was even taken to Kiev. He is considered to be the patron-saint of travellers and also traders and is remembered in connection with good weather and abundance of crops.