

News

Rector's vision in supporting those who need help whatever their creed or colour

REPORTER TED O'NEILL CATCHES UP WITH FATHER DAVID STEPHENSON AT ONE OF HIS MANY FUNDRAISING EVENTS AT BOSTON'S ST BOTOLPH'S



Father David Stephenson

THE job of the Vicar of Boston was one which had a long history.

Possibly the most influential was the Rev John Cotton who preached at The Stump from 1612 to 1632 before departing for the Americas.

The Rev Richard Coles, former musician from The Communards, was also an influential part of the church community in St Botolph, since his piano playing on the single 'Don't leave me this way' echoed across the world many years before he served as curate here from 2005-2011.

However, Boston no longer has a vicar, it has a Rector. The last vicar was the popular Alyson Buxton who held the title until 2023.

Normally only a country parish has a Rector whereas a town has its first Rector and this one is a genuine yellowbelly from Kirkby on Bain, who intends to make a big difference.

This particular yellowbelly, of course, is in charge of one of the largest parish churches in England by floor area which has the tallest parish church tower in the country and he spoke to us about all the new activities going on in his iconic building.

The day I interviewed Father David, a figurehead of Boston's cultural life and senior Doctor had

remarked that The Stump has a new role in society beyond its traditional cultural one.

The Rector is proud of the role St Botolph is playing in the community, hosting coffee mornings, with Scouts camping on the floor, and concerts too.

He said: "The Stump has always been a place of sanctuary and seen as a beacon that attracts people to Boston.

"The stump is now a major cultural hub for lots of cultural and non-religious

projects - music, orchestras, rock evenings.

"What is Boston without the Stump? In August alone we had 15,000 people through the door. This is a massive tourist attraction on top of everything else.

"Just seeing someone who's come to light a candle and sit quietly and pray in a place saturated with peace is a beautiful thing and equally when the building is full of people, many

of people I don't know but they're enjoying an exhibition or festival."

But these apparently 'unholy' activities in St Botolph seem like a contradiction with Jesus' actions of cleansing the Temple of Jerusalem, when he threw out the money-lenders and vendors of animals for sacrifice.

Father David said: "It depends what you mean by unholy.

"Jesus is speaking against people

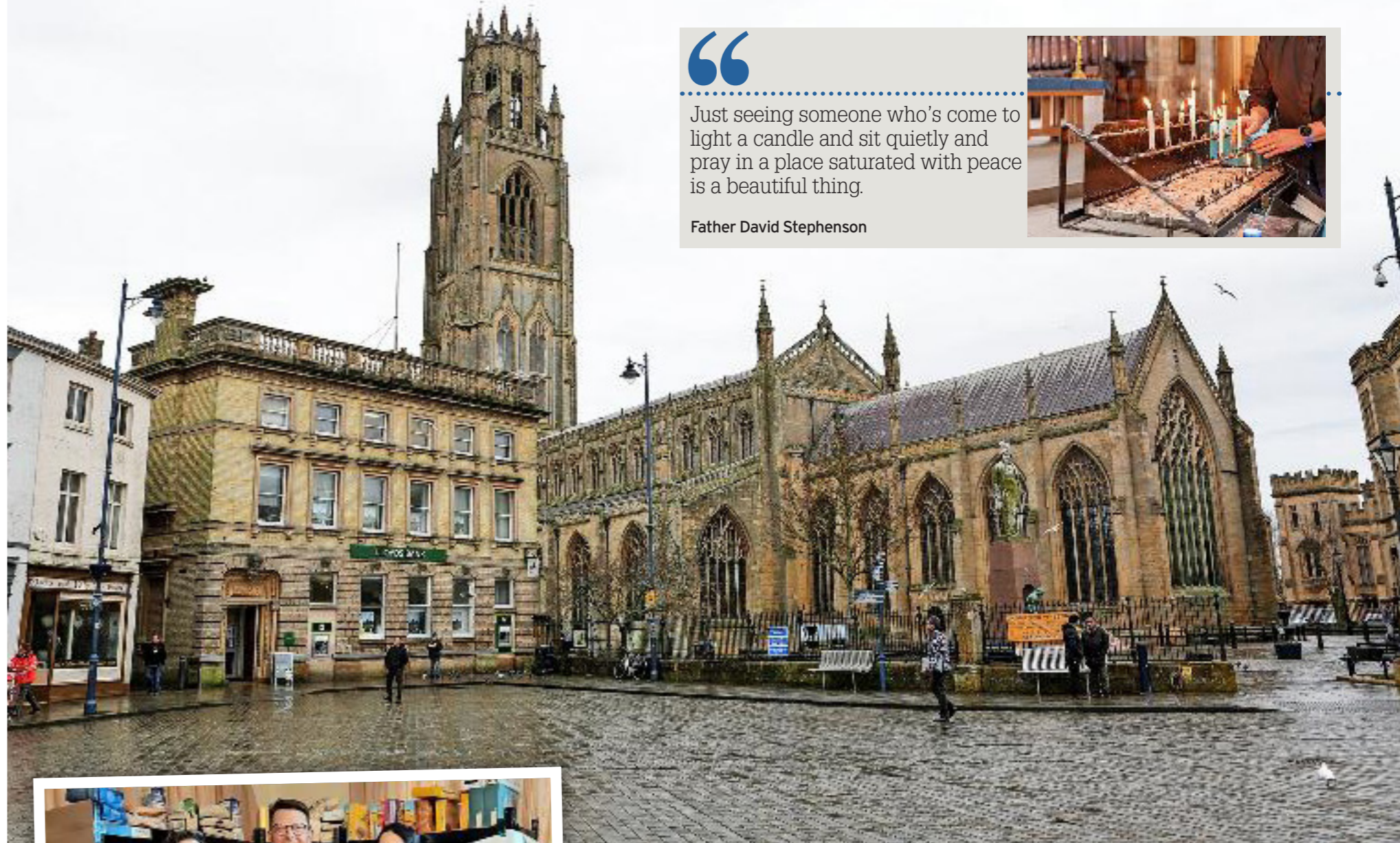


Father David Stephenson

“What is Boston without the Stump? In August alone we had 15,000 people through the door.”
Father David



Father David gives a blessing at Boston May Fair



“

Just seeing someone who's come to light a candle and sit quietly and pray in a place saturated with peace is a beautiful thing.

Father David Stephenson



Father David is a staunch supporter of Boston Foodbank

who are self-serving - dishonest, exploiting people, selling irresponsibly.

"By comparison, in the Stump, everything is for a good cause - opportunity to climb the tower / buy a souvenir - raises money for charity and helps maintain the building

amongst many other things.

"It pays the £3,000 gas bill. To open our doors there is a cost. What we pay is what we raise."

David Stephenson leads a team of four clergy at the Stump, and much of the cultural activities are the brainchild of his 'verger' Adam Kelk,

The Stump filled to the rafters

ON the day Fr David spoke to The Boston Target, St Botolph was full of people during the so called "Autumn Days Big Coffee Morning" when many organisations catering to older residents put on stalls in the building.

The member of parliament for Boston and Skegness was there too.

Richard Tice MP said: "Boston has a fantastic range of organisations supporting our local

community, and it was wonderful to see so many of them exhibiting inside the iconic Boston Stump.

"The event was extremely busy, well attended, and thoroughly enjoyable. I valued the opportunity to speak directly with both the organisations present and local residents too."

It is understood that the priest and the politician did not come face to face during the coffee morning.

described as "the powerhouse by David's side bringing new life to the building."

Father David said: "He absolutely is. We have a really strong core team of staff at the stump alongside our volunteers but we all share the same common purpose - which for many of us is our vocation and Christian ministry.

"It's important to note that not all our volunteers are Christians. We welcome anyone who comes through our door and many of those people volunteer for us."

Father David also spoke to us about his vision of being there and supporting people who need a neighbour whatever their creed, their colour and their name.

The second commandment of Christ tells Christians to 'love your neighbour as yourself', and David Stephenson seems to really take that to heart when thinking about people who arrive in Boston from other places.

He said: "For us, the Christian gospel imperative is so clear: to welcome, feed, clothe and support everybody who needs help.

"The beauty of the church of England is there's someone responsible for you and your wellbeing regardless of your faith, denomination or tradition, there is someone watching over you.

"There is an issue with refugees and asylum seekers nationally and

that includes Boston and the problem is that people are dropped here with no means to support themselves and no access to support."

As a proud Yellowbelly and Englishman, David Stephenson is equally proud of St George, although he sounded uncomfortable with the way the flag of England's saint is currently being used.

He said: "George is the patron saint of many countries. St Alban was the first Christian martyr from England and St George took over as

patron of this country as the result of the crusades.

"George is a Christian Saint, and the basis of English law is Christian values and teaching.

"I appreciate that people are entitled to have their own attitudes and beliefs and have the right to make protests as a part of our democratic society.

"I think it's disappointing that a Christian symbol is being used to represent an unchristian attitude."



Father David is a proud Yellowbelly