

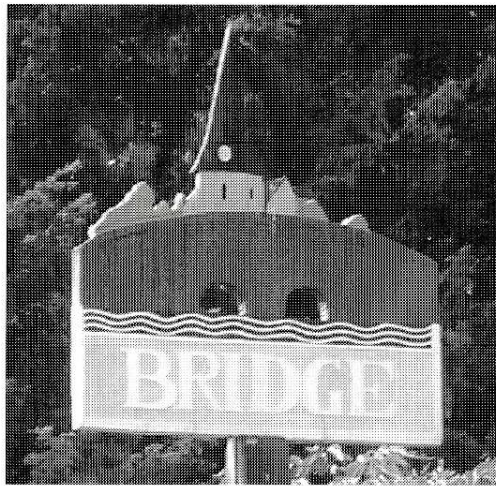
A Brief Historical Tour of  
**THE VILLAGE OF BRIDGE**

And its Environs



Bridge and District History Society 2007

2014



*D. R. ...*

A Brief Historical Tour of  
**THE VILLAGE OF BRIDGE**

And its Environs



*Bridge Street in 1661: Willem Schellinks*  
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*Bridge and District History Society 2007*

*2nd edn 2014*

This brief tour guide to Bridge is based upon a small part of the considerable amount of archive material that the History Society now possesses. If in particular it succeeds in stimulating readers to offer corrections or further information concerning the events and people mentioned, or on any other topic, or pictures of any of the buildings described, we shall be most grateful to receive them. In preparing this booklet, we have endeavoured to be as accurate as possible in what we have selected to record, but we apologise for any inaccuracies which may have occurred. Sometimes people's recollections of the past vary. Inevitably, what we have been able to include has been circumscribed by the space available.

Many of the images we have reproduced come from the Bridge History Society's archive collection. We would like to thank the Courtauld Institute of Art Gallery, London for permission to reproduce the view of Bridge in 1661; Kent Archaeological Trust, for the picture of Bridge Church before 1860 and the structural drawings of Bridge Farm. The picture of Bridge Windmill is reproduced by permission of English Heritage. NMR. We are grateful to all those who have made material available for our use – written, verbal or photographic.

We are grateful to the Highland Investment Co Ltd for their kind donation to this project, and in particular would like to thank Mr Bill Ronan and Cllr Martin Vye for their help in obtaining generous financial support from Kent County council.

*Meriel Connor*  
*Maurice Raraty*

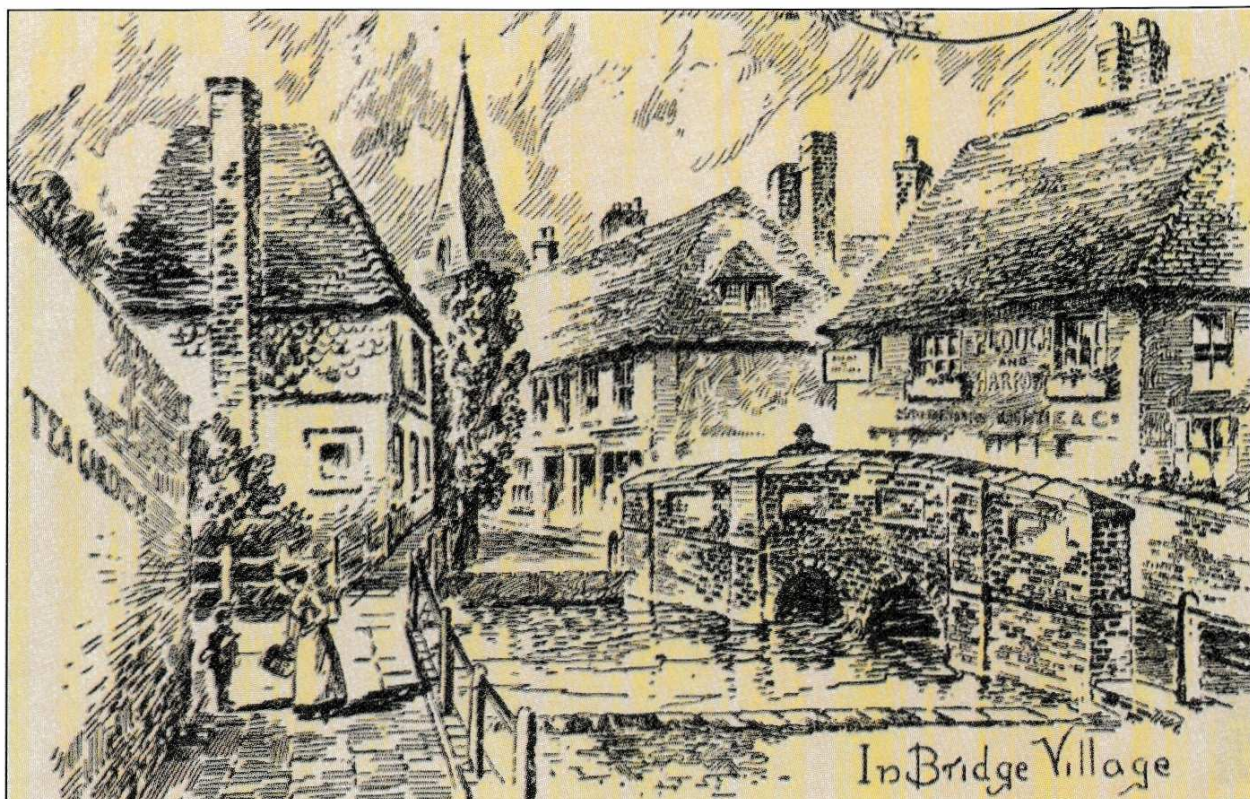
conventionally by name

## THE VILLAGE OF BRIDGE

with captions in bold, refer to the accompanying pictures

The **village of Bridge** lies astride the Nailbourne – when, that is, the ‘bourne’, an intermittent water course of the Little Stour, is flowing! The river has its ultimate source at East Brook, near Etchinghill – hardly more than 3 miles from the channel coast at Hythe, but it only flows continuously from the spring at Well Chapel, Littlebourne. It dries up, or runs underground, frequently. When the Wantsum Channel was open to the sea, the Nailbourne, which flowed into it, was a faster and wider water course. As late as the 1920s, it is said that trout were to be caught from the river at School Lane, Bekesbourne. Legends abound of the river in full flow portending national disaster. As recently as 2000 there was widespread flooding. The *Kentish Travellers’ Companion* of 1794 records that ‘the bridge being decayed and otherwise inconvenient for carriages, a new and more commodious one has been built by subscription’: this double-arched bridge still survives beneath

crossed Stour



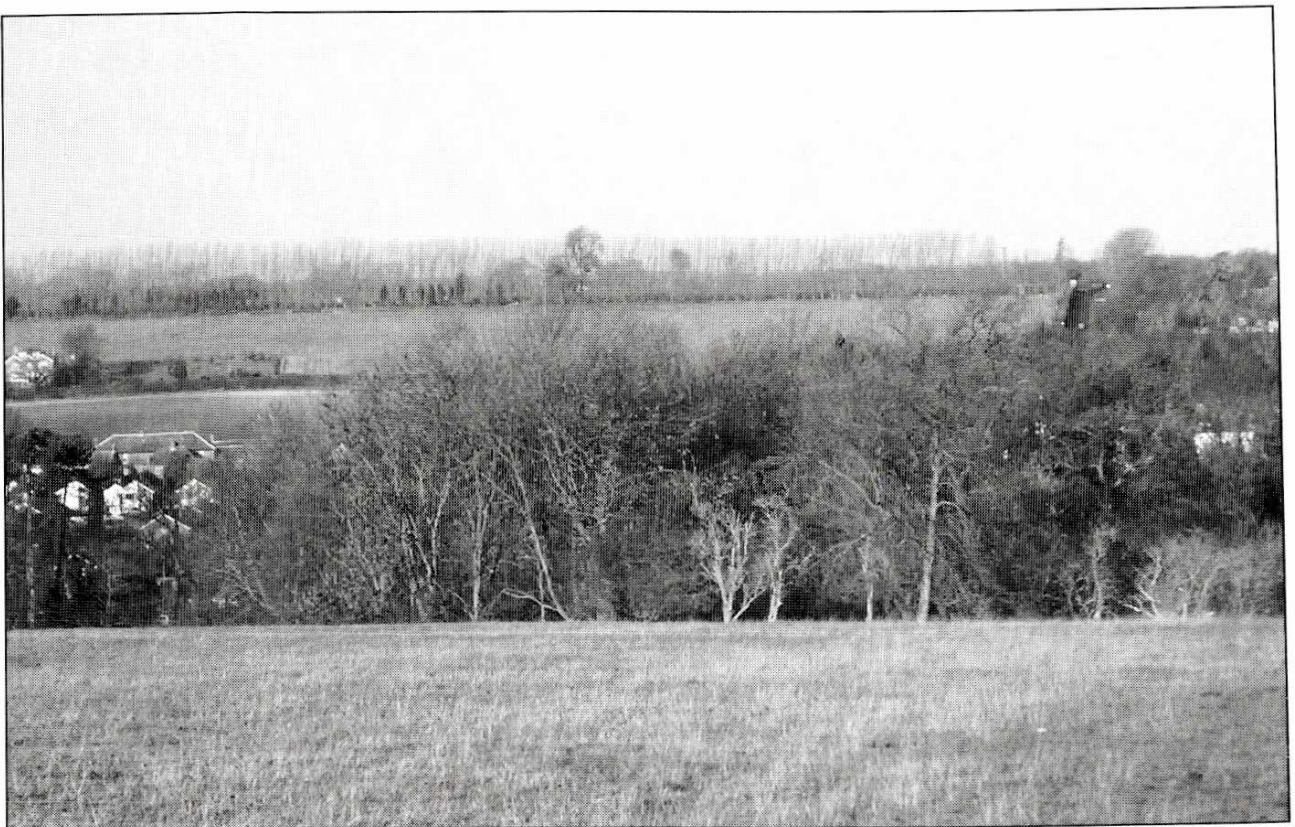
## THE VILLAGE OF BRIDGE

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the present road. Cozens' *History of Kent* of 1798 states that Bridge 'is now but a small village of about 20 houses, situated in a narrow valley', but the bridge allowed the easy passage of travellers, and it is because of the road itself that Bridge has developed into the village it is today.

From *Domesday*, we learn that the abbot of St Augustine's Abbey held the hundred of Bridge. A hundred was an administrative district within an English shire, with a court house, or meeting-place, usually located centrally within it, often sited at river crossings or cross roads. Within the hundred, the parish of Bridge comprised two manors: that of Bereacre, of which no trace remains in terms of a big house; and the more significant manor of Blackmansbury, in which a building referred to by Hasted, the eighteenth century historian of Kent, as 'the court lodge', was situated, probably on the site of the present Bridge Place. The parish of Bridge, as we think of it today, was regarded throughout the Middle Ages and beyond as a subsidiary part of Patricbourne. Indeed, the proximity of the church to the parish boundary may be taken as evidence that the parish of Bridge was originally formed by detachment from Patricbourne, as the latter was from Bekesbourne.

Archaeological evidence shows Bridge to have been the site of an Iron-Age settlement, and pottery, fragments of weapons and other artefacts have been excavated from the Romano-British period. A near-circular hollow, cut into by the road part way up Bridge Hill, and traditionally known as '**Old England's Hole**', may well represent a defensive position, constructed by the ancient Britons to protect their river crossing after their defeat by Ceasar's seventh



To service the  
fleet at Dover

2nd

legion in 54BC – or it may be just an old chalk quarry. Since the first century AD, when the Romans first built the road, travellers to and from Europe have come through Bridge. Harris in his *History of Kent* of 1719, lists various encampments on Barham Down at different times, whose occupants would have had to take the road from Dover to London on their journey between the coast and Canterbury. King John, in 1212, assembled on the Down with '60,000' men, ready to repel any attempted invasion from France. It is likely that King Henry V marched down Bridge Hill on his return from Agincourt in 1415, to celebrate his victory in Canterbury Cathedral. In 1450, during Cade's Rebellion, 'John Ysake of Patrykesbourne . . . and William atte Wode of Brigge, smyth, and other men in Brygge hundred . . . gathered together against the statutes of the realm' but were 'granted general pardon at the request of the queen'. Every three years throughout the 15th century, a huge wax candle, rolled into a coil, or trindle, was carried on the road through Bridge – a gift from the people of Dover to be used at the cathedral to provide tapers for the poor and destitute to light at the shrine of St Thomas. This must have been one of the more unusual items to pass through the village of Bridge, matched only, perhaps, by the four dromedaries and two camels brought in 1466 by the lord patriarch of Antioch, as a gift for the king and queen! In 1520, King Henry VIII must have passed through Bridge with his magnificent retinue on his way to meet Francis 1 of France in June 1520, to celebrate peace in great splendour at the Field of the Cloth of Gold. In the 1630's, during the thirty years war, Spanish silver was carried in great quantities from Dover on the road to London to be minted into coin.

Braems?

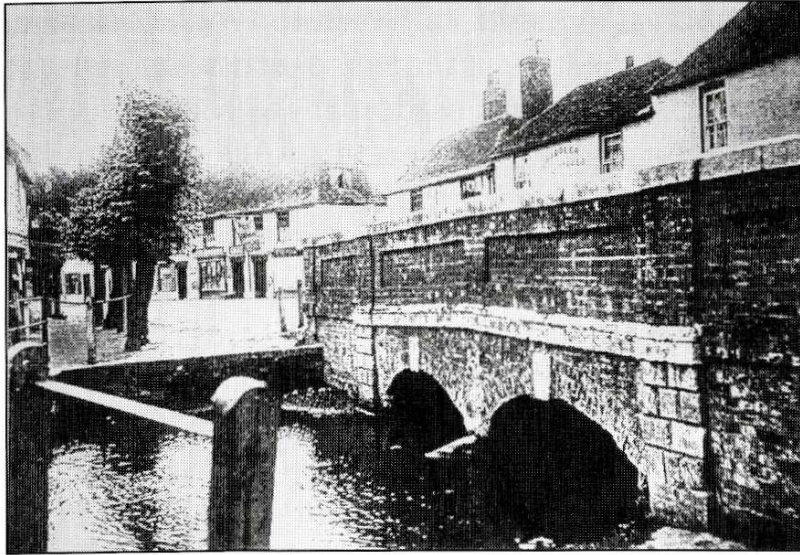
In August 1799, at the height of an invasion scare during the Napoleonic wars, more than 10,000 infantrymen camped on Barham Down to prepare for invasion. The *Kentish Gazette* recorded that

The immense train of farmers' and artillery wagons employed in conveying the troops and baggage, ammunition, military and other stores and provisions towards the camp, adding to the numerous carriages filled with officers and other passengers; these together have produced a scene of populousness and traffic in this ancient city [of Canterbury], which has not been beheld by its inhabitants since the days of St Thomas Becket.

In preparation for this influx, a Dr Wardell, physician to the forces quartered in Bridge, was looking for a 'roomy house or other sort of building . . . to be used for a regimental hospital'.

The hills on either side of the village were once steeper than they are now. In summer, the passage of traffic over the road surface resulted in clouds of dust; in winter in muddied ruts. On 26 December 1769, the *Kentish Gazette* noted that 'some public-spirited Gentlemen intend to petition Parliament for

2  
a Turnpike Act' for the road from Dover to Canterbury. Substantial roadworks included the lessening of the gradient of both hills down into the village and the smoothing out of the slope – though the work was not completed until 1829. Tolls were imposed, and there was to be 'no parking in the street' – a controversial issue even today! The street was not tarred, of course, until the mid-20th century, and the wide water-splash to one side of the Bridge, used for watering horses or cooling the metal rims of wheels after the steep descent into the village, also remained in place until well into the 20th century. b



The origins of the village lie in its dependency on the road. For centuries, the buildings flanking its single street were principally concerned with meeting the needs of travellers and passers by – premises supplying food and drink, a blacksmith, saddler, shoemaker and so on. Numerous daily coach services provided a

connection to London. A long-term Bridge resident, Mrs Jack Friend, was able to recall in 1955 how, in her childhood, a four-in-hand coach travelled daily through the village on its journey from Folkestone to Canterbury and return, with a post horn to alert passengers of its arrival.

source?  
In the Great War, troops were once again encamped close to Bridge. One day in 1914, the roadway up Bridge Hill was thick with chalky dust as over 100 London buses passed through to be used in France as transport for the troops. The dust became so thick that the drivers complained the enemy had covered the surface with something to choke them. This story even made the London newspapers! Probably the drivers were more used to the better constructed surfaces of London roads.

latter  
In both World Wars, a canteen was established in Bridge village hall, to serve the men stationed outside the village. During the later war, the milestones up Bridge Hill were taken up and anti-tank emplacements installed at the top of Bridge Hill to prevent the enemy progressing down the A2. Indeed, one afternoon in 1981, some of the residents of Bridge Hill were required to evacuate their houses in response to an alert concerning an unexploded device found on the Hill! By the middle of the 20th century, the A2 London-Dover road, including Bridge High Street, became increasingly congested, as heavy traffic thundered through the village. In January 1962, pensioner George Smith

bunkers still exist





was knocked down and killed while out shopping. In 1963, two lorries and a bus were involved in a collision in the main street. Incidents like this became increasingly frequent and, by 1964, the villagers had had enough. They launched a series of protests in support of the construction of a bypass. Initially, these protests consisted of people walking in the roadway, to

disrupt the flow of traffic to cause the vehicles to slow down. When this action failed, the villagers resorted to sitting in the road. Clearly the spirit of Cade's Rebellion was not dead! In 1972, a Dover-bound truck drove into **Colin Lewis's grocer's shop**, trapping a young girl and killing the driver. After this, the sit-down protests increased in frequency until on one occasion a thousand people staged a sit-in in the High Street, closing the village to all traffic for an hour and causing a very long tail-back. Eventually, repeated lobbying and demonstrations led to victory and a bypass was opened on 29 June 1976 accompanied by **great celebration**. At last the villagers were able to enjoy their village in relative peace and comfort.



The history of Bridge is not that of a characteristic medieval village, radiating from its centre; nor yet was Bridge part of any great estate, even though in later years it has been surrounded by great houses, notably Bourne House, Bridge Place, Higham and Bifrons – all of whose owners have played their part in developing the village, though only Bridge Place lies within the parish boundaries. For most of its existence, the inhabitants of Bridge have numbered no more than a few hundred. The late 18th century saw the building of a few cottages in Brewery Lane. In the 19th century, the Workhouse (1835) was built, as were houses in Dering and Filmer Roads (1860's). The later 19th century saw a gradual extension along the Street towards Canterbury. It is only since 1962 that there has been any serious expansion, with the construction of Bridge Down (1962), Western Avenue (1963) and Riverside Close (1965). In the census for 1801, the population of the entire parish was 325. By 1834 it had reached 543, and in 1841 it was 817, of whom 165 were inmates of the workhouse. In 1871 the population reached 941, declining to 699 in 1921 as agricultural employment diminished.

In the 1960s, Bridge began to change irrevocably, with the demolition of the most notable building at its centre, the 14th century **Bridge Farm**, and the development of housing, resulting in a population in 1971 of 1225, and by the Millennium, of almost 2000. The village still boasts more than twenty houses dating to the 18th century or before, and others built in the 19th century.



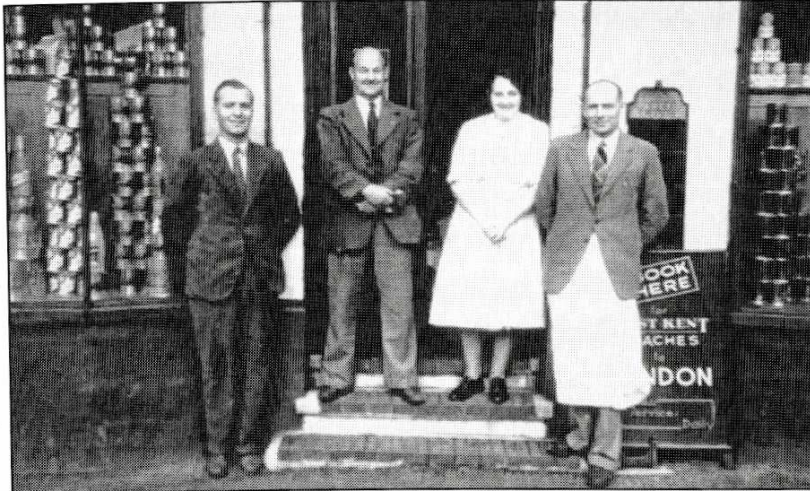
Some of the houses in the Street are older than they look, having received new fronts in the 18th century.

Historically, employment of the villagers of Bridge was provided by a thriving retail trade and serving the needs of travellers in the public houses and inns. Significant numbers were engaged in farm labour, much of it seasonal: hop tying, stone picking, cherrying, hay making, pea and bean harvesting, fruit picking, hop picking. The hop garden near Flint Cottages has been growing hops since the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, and a few hops are still grown. Local shops, the dental and doctors' surgery, the care home and the pubs and restaurant still provide more employment than many villages but most villagers, of course, now commute elsewhere to work.

In the last thirty years Bridge has lost a number of shops, but it remains a

9.11.7  
16.00

32  
37



thriving community, boasting a post office and pharmacy, general store, bakery, butcher, hairdresser, photography studio, school, church, care home, restaurant and three pubs. It is served by a regular bus service to Canterbury, Dover and Folkestone. It has an

*garage*

active parish council, and hosts many local societies, including such charitable enterprises as the Fish scheme.

The most substantial house in the parish was **Bridge Place**, built on the site of what was probably the medieval Court Lodge in the manor of Blackmansbury, alias Bridge. Here



Symonson's map of Kent of 1596 shows a building lying astride the Nailbourne, a reminder of the medieval watermill that surely once occupied the site. Until Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries, the manor of Blackmansbury was in the possession of the abbey of St Peter, St Paul and St Augustine,

*e had to be moved being divided*

Canterbury, and was let to tenants. With the suppression of the Abbey in 1538, the manor reverted to the Crown. Henry VIII granted the manor to John Laurence, whose family retained it until 1576, when it was sold to William Partheriche, who built a new house on the site. Traces of this house were revealed in an archaeological excavation in 1964/5 and relics of the old house survived in the basement until the 1970's. Partheriche was surveyor of the Ordnance Office under Elizabeth I, and was appointed by the queen in 1582 to undertake extensive works at Dover Harbour. He died in 1598 and was buried in his chapel in Bridge church. William's grandson, Edward, sold the property in 1638 to Arnold Braems.

*when B was converted into a country club*

THE VILLAGE OF BRIDGE

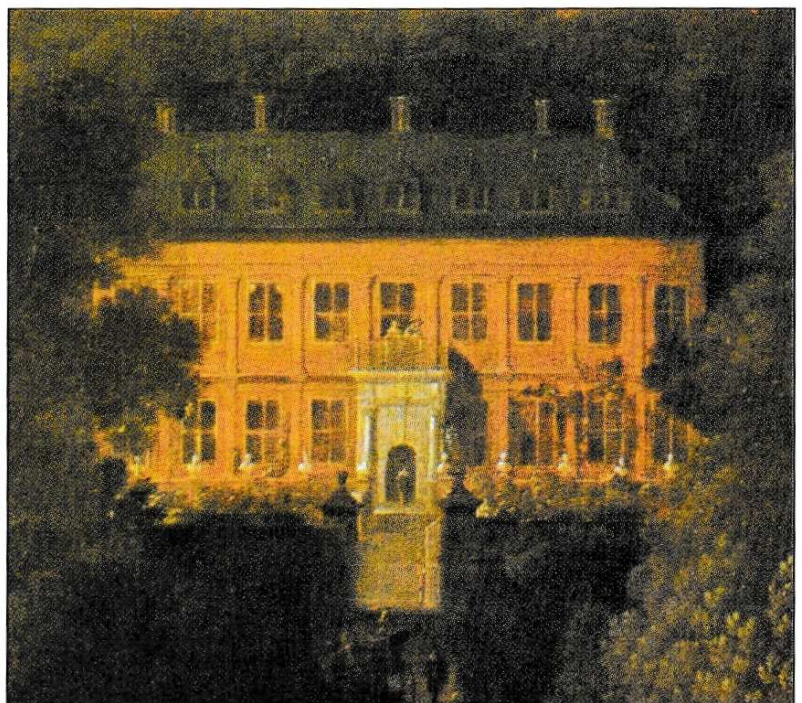


Braems was born in Dover in 1602. His ancestors were of Flemish descent – immigrants who had originally settled at Sandwich in the 16th century. During the Civil War, he was a loyal supporter of Charles I. At the Restoration of Charles II, his loyalty was rewarded with a knighthood. Braems was a Dover merchant and, preferring commerce to politics, he worked to develop Dover as a successful port, acquiring land on the seafront, creating vast warehouses for goods, and making a fortune on harbour tolls and customs. This fortune he spent in the building of a fine house in Bridge, and in support of his King. He lived in Bridge until his death in 1681. Built on

during the civil war

the site of the former manor house, with hand-made Dutch bricks, **Bridge Place**, was the largest house in 17th century East Kent, excepting Chilham Castle. It had a deer park, an extensive garden, an aviary, a bowling green, woods, a rabbit warren, 'beautifully well-kept pleasure grounds' and a fine avenue of lime trees stretching to the church. Arnold Braems had a reputation as a generous host, who kept a 'princely table'. Among his guests was the artist Willem Schellinks who in 1661 recorded his visit in his journal and made a number of sketches, including a view of the Street from the bottom of Bridge Hill. Another guest writes of being 'merrily entertained' at Braems' 'delightful residence at Bridge, one hour's walk from Canterbury'. The company played bowls, and 'we saw a hart shot with a crossbow in the deerpark . . . everybody, especially the ladies, washed their hands in the warm blood, to get white hands. The hart was immediately gutted and cut up into quarters'. The following day, 'venison pie and other dishes of the hart were on the menu'.

Walter Braems inherited the house on his father's death in 1681, but by this time the



the women survivors of the civil war

Parsons draw

materials from Westenhanger Castle, by Dame Elizabeth Aucher, widow of Sir Henry Aucher, for her son Hewytt, between 1704 and 1707 on the site of an ancient house known as Hautbourne. (The Haute family, kinsmen of Edward IV's queen Elizabeth Woodville, was prominent in the area in the 15th century.)

In 1756, Stephen Beckingham, who had married an Aucher granddaughter, inherited the estate. In 1765, Mozart was a guest in the house, and while staying there, visited the popular Barham Downs racecourse. In 1845, Matthew Bell, a director of Equitable Life and the owner also of 'Oswalds' in Bishopsbourne, purchased the house. Bell was responsible for the construction of the ornamental lake, and of a number of buildings in the vicinity, including estate cottages, the school in Bishopsbourne and Bridge Lodge in Bridge. Such buildings are often distinguished by a stone plaque, showing an intertwined MFB motif, for Matthew and Fanny Bell, his wife. When the Elham Valley railway was built at the end of the 19th century, Matthew Bell agreed to its passing through his land only if it was hidden by a cut-and-cover tunnel where it ran behind his house. Memorials to the Auchers and the Bells can be seen in the north chapel of Bishopsbourne church.



Bell's grandson (also Matthew) died in 1927, at which time the house was purchased by Sir John Prestige, who owned it until his death in 1962. In the 1950s, Sir John proposed that Kent County Council should take over the house as a museum, but this scheme did not materialise, and by 1957 the house was empty and in a poor state of repair. Sir John then sought to have the house demolished, but following a public enquiry, a Preservation Order was placed on the house, which was eventually Grade One listed. Extensive restoration work followed, and Sir John's next scheme was to offer the house and 300 acre estate as the site for the new University of Kent, but this too was turned down.

During the 1960s and 70s, the house changed ownership a number of times, and various proposals were made for its future. These included a religious house, a residential retirement club, a private hospital, offices and residential accommodation and a luxury hotel. The house's future became assured when it was purchased in 1983 by Lady Juliet, the only daughter of the 8th Earl Fitzwilliam, and Mr Somerset de Chair, a conservative MP and noted collector of art and antiques. Sensitive and expert restoration work was carried out on

the house and grounds. Somerset de Chair died in 1995 aged 83. Lady Juliet remarried in 1997, and the work of improving and enhancing the grounds, the house and its contents has continued.



One of the first cricket matches in Kent took place on the ground at **Bourne Park**, now sadly disused, but which in the 18th century attracted very many people. In 1767 booths selling food were available on the cricket ground itself, including one for gentlemen ‘in a tent pitched for that purpose, separate from all the other booths’. After 1780, publicans from Bridge and Canterbury were allowed to set up booths operating outside the ‘paddock’. When Hambledon played England in August 1772 under the patronage of the then tenant Sir Horace Mann, a grandstand was built to accommodate the huge crowd. There were said to be 20,000 people present on the first day. Many of the supporters were ordinary Kentish folk, and a rhyme of 1773 suggests how far they were willing to travel:

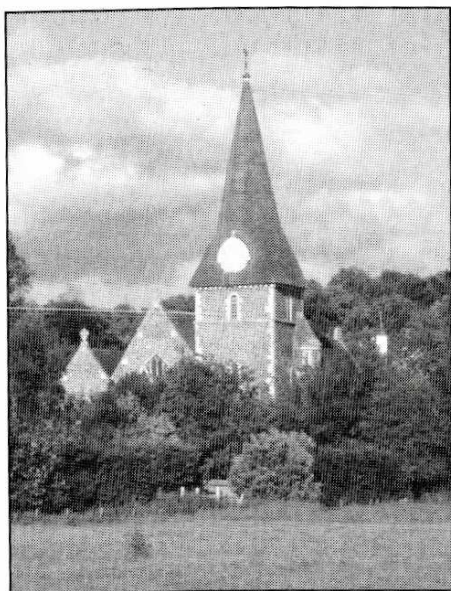
From Marsh and Weald their hay fork left  
To Bourne the rustics hied  
From Romney, Cranbrook, Tenterden  
And Darent’s verdant side

For many centuries **Bridge church**, built in the late 12th century on the site of a previous Anglo-Saxon chapel, served as no more than a ‘chapel of ease’ for the church at Patricbourne, providing for the ‘ease’ of those living at some distance from the parish church. By tradition, such chapels were often built at the roadside, and often near river-crossings, for the convenience of

## THE VILLAGE OF BRIDGE

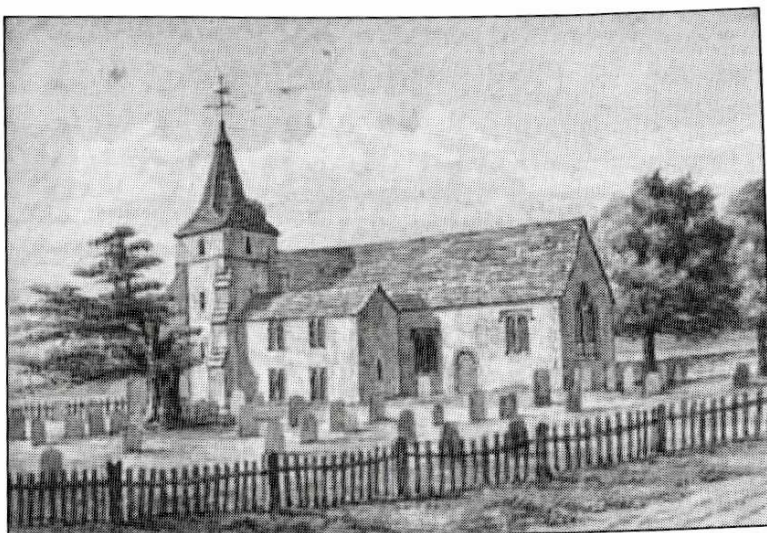
travellers, so Bridge church satisfied both these requirements. As the parish of Bridge grew, however, its inhabitants became increasingly resentful of their subordinate position to Patrixbourne. Indeed, at the time of Archdeacon Harpsfield's visitation, in 1557, the parishioners submitted a petition requiring

That the said chapel of Bridge may be appointed to be the head church to Patrixbourne, because as they say, the said chapel standeth in the midst part of the inhabitants of both parishes, and that Patrixbourne standeth in the uttermost part of the dwellers of the two parishes, very far out of the way.



In 1844 WP Griffith surveyed **Bridge church**. His report, when compared with its present appearance, shows the extent to which it was rebuilt in 1859-61 by the generosity of Mrs Mary Gregory, wife of the Vicar of Petham, who lived in Bridge Hill House, and was related to the Aucher family. She died in 1867, and left a bequest to the poor of the village, which has only recently been wound up. The restoration of the church was achieved, according to the Pevsner guide, 'with gross insensitivity'! Some vestiges remain of the medieval architecture, including

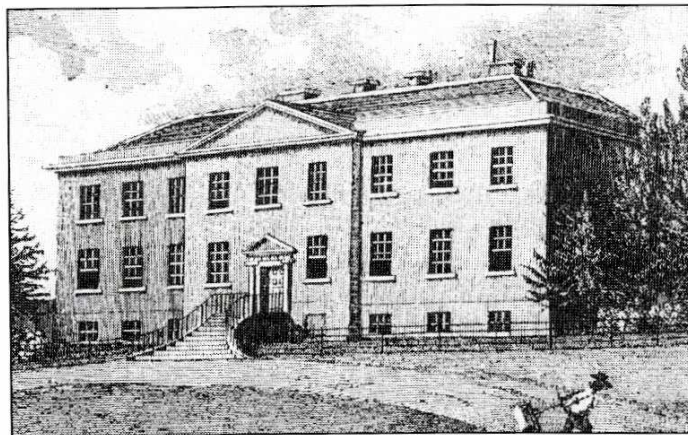
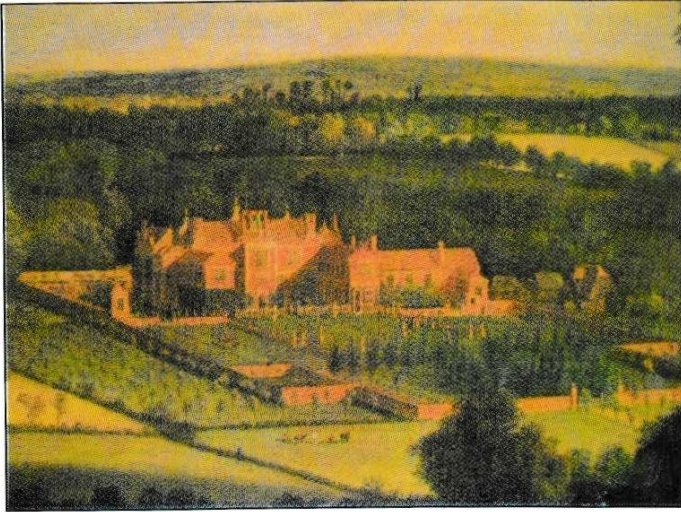
two Norman doorways and various sculpted pieces inserted in the walls, including an effigy of Malcolm Ramesey (vicar 1495-1538). There is also a portrait of Robert Bargrave (1584-1649) by Cornelius Janssen, a frequent visitor to Bridge Place. Outside the west door and rarely noticed is the top slab of a 15th century table



tomb, once containing several brasses. The churchyard contains a number of notable memorials to Bridge villagers, not least that of Zebulon Vinson, butler to Mrs Gregory. The churchyard was closed 31 October 1990.

Patrixbourne derives its name from the illustrious Patrick family, who came to Kent from Normandy at the Conquest. The family was 'one of the most ancient and illustrious in Normandy', who came from La Lande-Patry in the Calvados region. In 1174, the manor was inherited by Ingelram Patrick, whose

daughter Maud married Ralph Tesson, sensechal of Normandy. His estates in England, including Patricbourne, were awarded to Geoffrey de Say. In the fifteenth century, a number of manors in the area were held by the Isaac family.



Early in the 17th century, John Bargrave built a fine house in Patricbourne, **Bifrons**. (John Bargrave's brother, Isaac, became dean of Canterbury Cathedral, 1625-43). In 1661 or 1662, the family sold the house and there were a number of owners before the original Bifrons was purchased by John Taylor in September 1694. His grandson, the Rev. Edward Taylor, inherited the property in c.1767. In 1775 he demolished the house and began the construction of the new Bifrons. A drawing survives of this '**plain building**' in a classical style with 'little architectural embellishment'. In 1802, Edward's son, Edward, married Louisa Beckingham of Bourne Place. After c.1807 Bifrons was probably let to tenants. It was

sold in 1830 to the first Marquess Conyngham.

Henry Conyngham was created marquess by George IV while he was Prince Regent. Conyngham married a wealthy heiress, Elizabeth Denison, whose father was a merchant banker. His rise through the ranks of the peerage was due to his services in Ireland, and the Conyngham's Irish country seat was (and still is) Slane Castle, between Belfast and Dublin. The Marquess was much at court, and held the post of Lord Steward of the Household until the king's death. Lady Conyngham was famed as the companion and confidante of George IV. A favourite at court, she was described as 'fat, handsome, kindly, shrewd and extremely fond of jewels'! The king heaped presents and money on her and, when in London, she and her family lived largely at his expense. Though they never appeared in public together, the king and the marchioness were often ridiculed by the press, but this did not seem to deter them. A popular rhyme at the time suggested that Lady Conyngham and George IV spent time



Quaffing their claret, then mingling their lips  
Or fondling the fat about each others hips

The king once said to her 'thank you, my dear; you always do what is right. You cannot please me so much as by doing everything you please, everything to show that you are mistress here'. However, it seems never to have been proven that their relationship was other than platonic.

The Marquess died in 1832. The Marchioness lived to the age of 91, and died in 1861. During her lifetime, she added considerably to her estates in Kent. She was active in Patricbourne and Bridge, founding a school and supporting the free schools' movement. She helped establish the Bridge Gas, Coke and Coal Company in 1858. Considerable alterations were carried out at Bifrons during the 19th century. When the fourth marquess inherited, he decided against living there; indeed the family ceased to live in the house after 1882, preferring to let the property to a succession of tenants. At the outbreak of the Second World War, Bifrons was cleared of its contents and taken over for military purposes. The condition of the house at the end of the War was poor. The Conyngham family was faced with the need to invest considerable sums

of money both on Bifrons and on Slane Castle, and having limited resources, chose to renovate the latter. For this reason, it was decided in 1950 to demolish Bifrons. A number of the houses in Patricbourne belonging to the estate were sold, and the land rented out



on long lease, together with the stable block, which was converted into flats for farm workers. The Conyngham family continue to take an active interest in their local property and in the village of Bridge. In 1989, Canterbury Archaeological Trust undertook an excavation of the Bifrons site, funded by the Conyngham estate, and reported in *Archaeologia Cantiana* in 1989. It was hoped at that time that the house might be reconstructed, but this plan was subsequently shelved.

**Higham** has been the site of a grand house (also said to have been a convent) since mediaeval times. The present building retains a Tudor core, but its front was added only in 1921 by perhaps the most colourful character to own the house, Count Louis Zborowski, who designed and built the first of several aero-engine powered racing cars, one of which later was immortalised in the film *Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang*. He also presented Bridge Fire Brigade with a

italics

one of 27th capacity



suitably adapted car to serve as a fire engine to accommodate ten men and a mile of hose. With a rating of 75 horse power, and a maximum speed of 60 miles per hour, this was probably the fastest fire engine of its kind in the country at the time. For his generosity, Zborowski was made honorary captain of the brigade.

After Zborowski's death in a racing accident the house was bought by Walter K Whigham, a director of the Bank of England and deputy chairman of the London & North Eastern Railway, after whom one of their Pacific Class locomotives was named. He served twice as High Sheriff of Kent. Whigham, for reasons of euphony, renamed the property Highland Court. He shared Zborowski's interest in the fire brigade, and is also believed to have supplied for it a new fire engine and helmets for the men.<sup>1</sup> During the second World War the house served as a hospital, and it continued in this role until the 1980s, when it was closed and the estate fell into a state of neglect. Since 1995, restoration and redevelopment has continued, and Higham has recovered its original name. *and stalled*

(Bridge) Hill House was in the 18th century popularly known as the *Horse and Groom* and served as the



<sup>1</sup> More recently, Harry Hawkins a prominent village tradesman, was captain of the fire brigade, and his son Eric still possesses a helmet.

water colour

headquarters of those involved with Canterbury Races. One of the two stands overlooking the course was sited in the woodland opposite. A painting by Thomas Rowlandson, in the Beany Institute in Canterbury, shows both this house and the two stands during a lively race meeting, in about 1804. Races on Barham Down began (officially at least) in 1678. A century later the races were attracting vast crowds, including the fashionable gentry, and in 1774 a 'new stand' was built, to supplement the original. There was a racing stable in Union Road, not far from the old windmill. The official race week was in August, but there was also a meeting at Easter and at various other times. In 1773, a race was run 'over the New Round Course on Barham Downs, one four-miles heat, for one hundred Guineas, between two Gentlemen's horses . . . to start exactly at Twelve o'clock. Dinner will be ready at Bridge-Hill after the race is over'. Racing was not limited to horses! In June 1770, there was a 'match of running between twenty-four of the Chilham Club and Twenty-four Gentlemen of East Kent'. In July the previous year was held 'A match of Running by Maids. To Strip at Five o'clock!' It was reported that the match was run 'to the great satisfaction of a vast concourse of people'. Cock fighting took place here, as at the *White Horse* in the village, too. In March 1773, Bridge met Deal 'to shew eleven cocks on each side and fight for Four Guineas a battle'. Once again, dinner was provided. At election times hustings would take place here and on the racecourse. In 1794, however, the house was bought by a refugee from the French Revolution, Charles Louis Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu (1749-1824), grandson of the political philosopher. He lived there until his death, when it was bought by the Revd Edward Gregory, vicar of Petham, whose wife Mary ensured the restoration of Bridge church.

**East Bridge House** dates to the early 19th century. More recently it was turned into three flats, until restored to a single house (and guesthouse) during the 1980s. To the rear of the house, where formerly the kitchens were to be found, is now a separate house with a doorway which was imported from Bifrons in Patricbourne, when it was demolished.



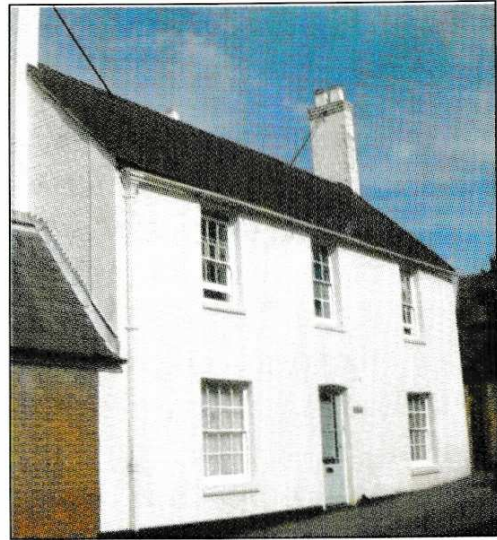
**Bourne Lodge** was built in the later 19th century and was the home of Mrs Fanny Bell, widow of Matthew Bell of Bourne Park. In 1926, Mr F Cowderoy left it to his son and daughter, the Rev C C Cowderoy (later Roman Catholic archbishop of Southwark) and Mrs C Berry. Mrs Berry lived in the house for many years with her husband



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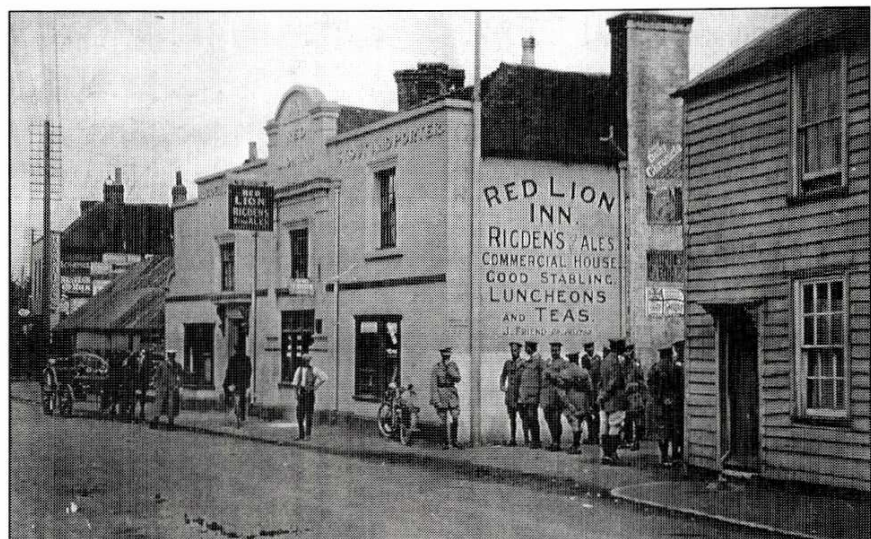
Frank, who was a well-known Canterbury estate agent. Their son, John Berry, subsequently lived there, with his family, until 1981.

**Lynton House** is first mentioned (though not by that name) in 1674, as the property of William Cheston, yeoman of Bridge, who was assessed in the parish rate for 12 acres of land. It subsequently came into the hands of the Crosoer family who in 1764 owned the house, barn, stable, garden, orchard and 24 acres. It later came into the hands of John Lansberry (d.1849) and for the rest of the century became known as Lansberry Cottage. From 1930-1940, the house belonged to a coal merchant, Albert Taylor, whose proud advertisement stayed on the south wall of the house until the late 20th century. Like Bourne Lodge, it suffered substantial damage in the storm of 1987. In recent years it has undergone considerable restoration, including the return of the front door to its original position.



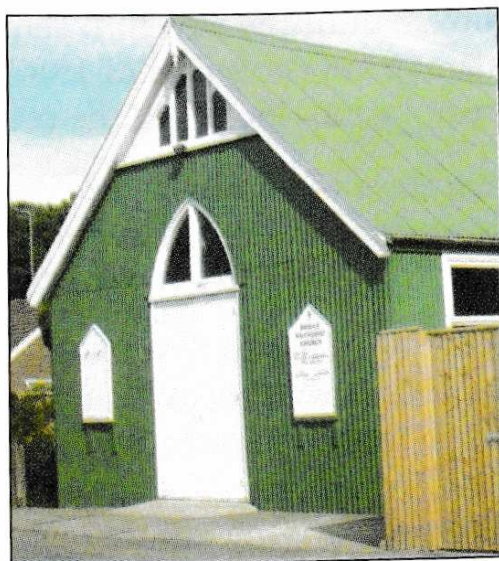
On the site of the lodge house opposite, Ogilby's map of 1675 marks, rather mysteriously, *The Grayhound*. Below Lynton House were formerly six small cottages, with Church Cottage, formerly Park House, opposite.

**The Red Lion** is first mentioned in 1593 as a dwelling house. It has a central hearth core of the period, but has been much altered since. It now has a late 18th century façade. By 1632, Jacob Jarvis, 'victualler of Canterbury', was granted a licence for the sale of ale on the premises, 'at the sign of the *Red Lion*'. It subsequently became a registered inn, with stabling facilities, serving the needs of travellers using the road from Canterbury to Dover. There were in addition three wheelwrights, two blacksmiths and two saddlers in the village, quite apart from the 'livery and bait' facilities offered here. On race days facilities were much in demand, both for horses and racegoers. By 1850 the landlord, Joseph Eyre, was advertising the *Red Lion* as 'a fine lodging inn, with carriage and stabling facilities'. For



a short period at the turn of the 20th century Bridge fire engine was also housed here, before being transferred to the rear of the *Plough and Harrow* in 1907. In 2000 the inn suffered serious damage from floodwater, and not long after it had undergone considerable refurbishment it was again severely damaged by fire in 2006.

The first mention of Methodism in Bridge occurs in 1823, authorising William Fordred to 'rent a house for Methodist meetings at no more than two shillings and sixpence per week'. A site was found in the High Street (for £50) and a chapel built (what is now the front portion of the village hall) but by 1851 the congregation had deserted, a number of them to the parish church, and the chapel had been taken over by the Primitive Methodists. Not until 1892 was a Methodist Society re-formed, with fourteen members, to raise funds for the building of a chapel and a regular schedule of services was re-established. In 1894 the 'Iron Chapel' was built. The choice of corrugated iron as a building material met with thorough disapproval from the central Chapel Committee in Manchester, who preferred the idea of a brick-built structure and were prepared to offer a loan to assist the financing of such a chapel. The Trustees for the Bridge venture were dedicated to the idea of their Iron Chapel, and a determined fund-raising effort and much hard work resulted in the erection of the chapel, free of debt. The cost of the building, including seating, hymn books, mats and oil lamps, amounted to a grand total of £139.17s.0 ¼d. During the Second World War, a baby clinic operated from the chapel, and this continued until 1987.



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sold.

The Bridge Gas, Coke and Coal Company was established in September 1858 on a site in Patricxbourne road (next to the school) to supply both villages, and Matthew Bell of Bourne Park became chairman of the company. Lamp posts were fitted and tested on 10 December 1858. Edward Dadds, the gasman, was provided with a cottage. A Memorandum of Agreement was made 7 January 1896 between Bridge Gas, Coke and Coal Company and the new Bridge Parish Council, that the company was to 'keep in repair and light . . . the Eleven existing Lamps for the sum of Five Pounds and Ten Shillings for each Lamp per annum. The Lamps to be lighted one hour after sunset and extinguished at 10.30 pm except for three months in the summer . . .' A further exception was made 'for five nights of every full Moon at which time the Lamps will not be required'. From 1906, general street lighting was installed, maintained by James Wonfer until 1928. Wonfer lived in the only house in Patricxbourne Road, Brookside, and was employed making gas and

installing it into houses in the village. He worked seven days a week, and was responsible for seeing that the street lights were lit in the village at dusk and extinguished after dawn. The coal depot for the gasworks was behind the Methodist chapel. Coke was produced and sold as a by-product. By 1929, gas was being supplied by East Kent Gas Company and the Bridge company was wound up in 1932.

During the 19th century, a number of schools existed in Bridge and the surrounding area. In the 1840s, the Marchioness of Conyngham established a school for 30 girls 'at Bifrons Gate', as well as a 'National School' for the remaining parish children in 'Soothouse Meadow'. It is said that the girls wore smart uniforms of blue serge dresses and red cloaks, presumably paid for by the Marchioness. It was quite common for philanthropic ladies to found such schools, not least to provide girls with an education suitable for their probable future career in domestic service. They were taught basic numeracy and literacy, but also sewing and other domestic arts. It is known that by 1859, Richard Wells was master of the 'National School', with Mrs Sophie Sayer as mistress, and that the school had 99 pupils, both boys and girls. By 1871 (following the 1870 Education Act), Mr and Mrs R Wye were in place as 'government teachers', and Miss Fanny Wye, Mrs Wye's sister, was employed from 1 January 1872 as an infant mistress. The school was enlarged in 1881 - Miss Fanny Wye records, on 4 November of that year, that they 'removed into the new school [which was] much more convenient than the old one'. This school building is that on Patricbourne Road, the **Bridge School** of the photograph. Fanny Wye, after 44 years at the school, was presented on her retirement with a purse of gold. Government inspectors praised her skill as a teacher to the 'little ones, to whom she had been a second mother'. She died in 1944, aged 94. Just four years later Miss Olive Seath (Mrs Knight) was appointed headmistress. She retired in 1971. The school house has been a private residence since the opening of the new school in Conyngham Lane in 1971: for two-thirds of the century of its existence therefore this old primary school had only two principal teachers! There were other Dame schools in the village - small, private elementary schools run by women, the usual fee being 3d or 4d per week. These largely disappeared after the 1870 Education



Act, though the school in Alexandra House survived until the first World War.

The 18th century row adjoining Brewery Lane contains a baker's shop which has existed on the site for at least 150 years. At the other end of the row was the chemist's, before it was removed to the Post Office at the other end of the village. In between was one of the more notable businesses to grace Bridge, again for over a century, that of the watch and clockmakers William Nash and Samuel and William Hardeman.



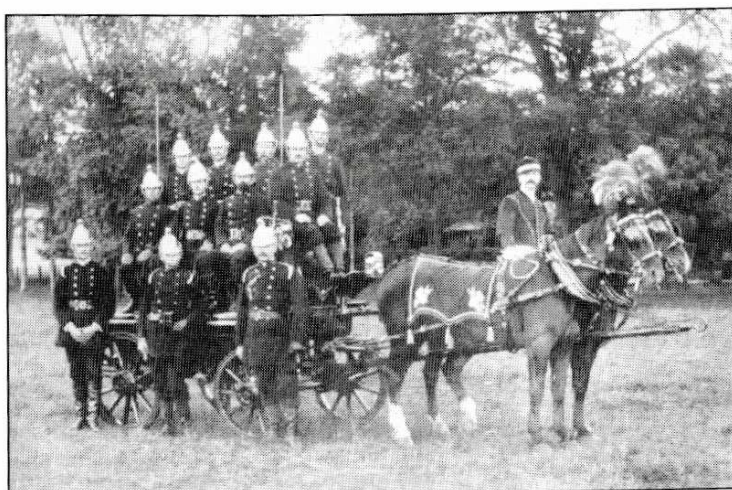
The Plough and Harrow was built in 1692, constructed originally as two dwelling houses and, in 1703, a shoemaker and a carpenter occupied the premises.



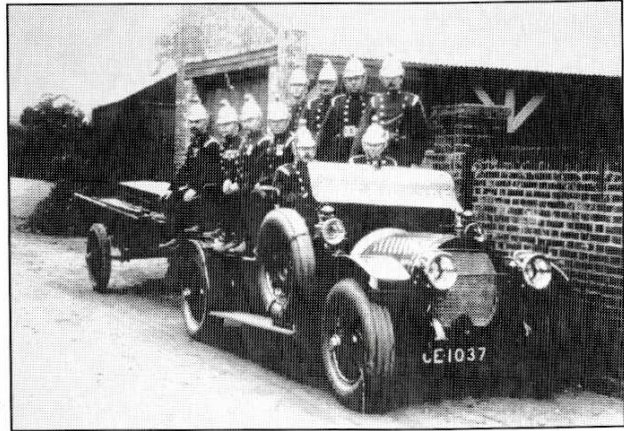
The building was sold in 1785 to Thomas Williams, a Maltster, who established a malthouse. Malting was a specialized process used in the making of ale. Following the terms of the Beer Act of 1830, Thomas Williams' son William acquired a licence to sell beer from his dwelling in 1831, whereupon it was known as 'the Beer House at

Bridge'. In 1858 Joseph Burch, an ale and porter brewer, bought the premises, and in 1863 it became known as the *Plough and Harrow*. In 1877, the pub was sold to Shepherd Neame as a 'beerhouse with brewhouse and outbuildings' for £410. By 1878, a new lessee was granted a licence for wine and spirits, and it became a registered tavern. Not until 1861 is 'Brewhouse Lane' identified in the census returns. In 1873,

a headquarters was set up for a **voluntary fire brigade**, and a fire engine was purchased. The Marquess of Conyngham, of Bifrons, was an enthusiast for fire apparatus and became Captain of the local crew. By 1878, his son and heir, Earl Mount Charles, had become captain. In the early days the



pump was horse-drawn. For many years the engine (including CE 1037, donated by Count Zborowski) was housed in a shed behind the *Plough and Harrow* and kept running through donations from insurance companies. The firemen were mostly local tradesmen (at the time of the photo, two grocers, the cycle agent, a publican, the draper, two gardeners, the coal merchant and the blacksmith) who were summoned to service with a maroon flare. On 31 March 1910, the brigade was called to a fire at Pett Bottom. The young second engineer of the fire brigade, John Fenn, had the job of preparing the flare. In lighting the match, two simultaneous explosions occurred, causing Mr Fenn terrible injuries. He died just twenty minutes after the explosion. His funeral, on April 3, was probably unique in Bridge, attracting a crowd of some 5000 mourners, who thronged the street and overflowed into the surrounding fields.



During the 1940s, the firemen's uniforms were supplied by the captain, and were passed on from one volunteer to another, regardless of size. A villager recalls how Harold De Cent, a small man known for his funny sayings, had considerable difficulty managing his over-large coat as he scrambled up the ladder! Another character, 'Hatcher Downs', the owner of the cycle shop, had a tendency to enter buildings by breaking down the door with his hatchet! After WW II the brigade was absorbed into the national fire service.

Close to the bridge and probably of 17th century origin, Anne's House, or **Willowbrook** once served also as a fish and chip shop. Damaged by fire in the 1920s, it has been in large part rebuilt. It is more recently remembered as a tea room, with a fine garden. The building to the right of these premises once served as a motor repair and spares shop and, more recently, a printer's studio.

Built around 1780, **River House** was once owned by T L Collard, auctioneer and valuer, and clerk



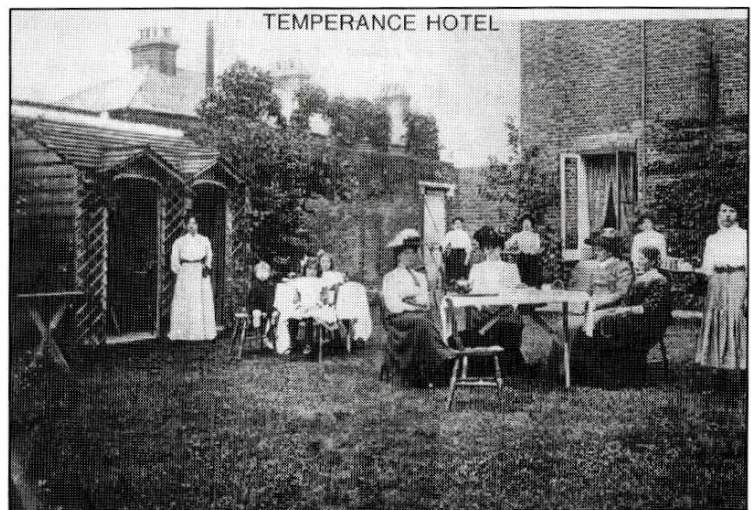


## THE VILLAGE OF BRIDGE



to the Board of Guardians of the workhouse. In 1904, the house was put up for auction, but failed to reach the reserve price of £390! It subsequently became a temperance hotel. The **Temperance Movement** originated in England in the 1820s. In 1831, the British and Foreign Temperance Society was formed and extended its influence over the country in a decade. In 1853, the UK

Alliance, a militant organization not always popular with the less forthright temperance societies, aimed to persuade politicians into a policy of prohibition, but this did not succeed. A temperance hotel would have provided a pleasing alternative to those who did not wish to stay in accommodation with licensed premises.



The sign of The *White Horse* is a thoroughly Kentish one, and this pub is probably the oldest surviving in Bridge. The building has a late mediaeval core, and an early 16th century inscription is to be seen on the fireplace lintel. An indenture of 1 June 1668 refers to the sale of the property by Sir



Arnold Braems to Sir Anthony Aucher, and the tenant at that time seems to have been William Ford. The ownership probably remained in the hands of the descendants of Sir Anthony and subsequent owners of Bourne Place until it was sold at the end of the 18th century. The pub was the posting house (hence also post office), though Bridge was only a half-stage away from

Visible  
Schellman  
drawing

Canterbury – necessary because of the hills on either side. Mail coaches were drawn by teams of four horses in stages of 7-10 miles, according to gradients and the condition of the road. The fastest mail-coaches ran at about 10 miles per hour. It was here that the first meeting of the workhouse guardians was held, on 22 April 1835. The census returns show that the inn often provided accommodation for lodgers including, in 1881, George Webb, aged 23, a professional cricketer. Like other public houses, the inn was used for property sales and auctions. The *White Horse* was host to meetings of gardening enthusiasts and to gardening shows. In April 1774, there was an ‘Auricula Feast’ held, with a prize for the first flower of fifteen shillings. Exhibitors at the show were expected to attend the dinner, ‘or have no Right to shew his Flower’! Less sympathetic to today’s readers’ taste would be the cock fighting, advertised in June 1772 ‘to show Twenty-one Cocks on each side . . . for four guineas a battle and ten the odd battle’. Finally, in the sporting line, the census returns of 1851 show that the licensee was ‘a trainer of racehorses’. R. Sheppard

One other public house within the parish might be mentioned here for completeness: the *Woodman’s Arms*, built as a farm (*Woodlands*) in 1623, licenced to sell ales, groceries and provisions in 1849 and renamed, now (since the 1960’s) the *Duck* at Pett Bottom.

Lime Cottage, built in the 15th or 16th century was formerly the **village forge** – the blacksmith and wheel-wright was much in demand when numerous horse drawn vehicles came regularly through the village, and the *White Horse*, next door, was the staging post. It was no doubt used also for the mending of farm equipment and other vehicles. Before becoming a private house it was for a period in the 1970’s Norman and Elsie Turner’s shop, which had its own market garden and small-holding behind, extending over some of the land currently occupied by the buildings of Riverside Close. From here customers could obtain freshly harvested produce, as well as new-laid free-range eggs, poultry and pork.

The handsome early 19th century row of houses known as **Albany Terrace** is said to have been built by Trinity House, the lighthouse authority for the coast of England and Wales, to serve their



g/Hobbs

pilots as a half-way-house at which to break their overland journey between Dover and Whitstable. Originally there were two more or less symmetrical detached buildings on the site. An additional house was created a few years later by infilling between them. A much-loved and stalwart resident of the terrace was for many years Charles Wills, who ran the village bakery for much of



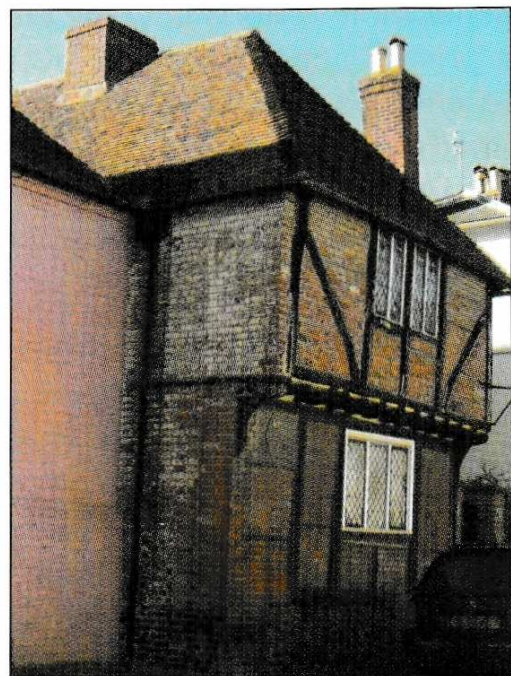
the early 20th century from 1896, in succession to his father Richard (1818-1908). He was an enthusiastic chief officer of Bridge Fire Brigade for over 30 years, as well as serving on the parish council from its inception. He served on the old Bridge Blean Rural District Council, the Board of Guardians of the workhouse, and was secretary to the Bridge Gas, Coal and Coke Company. During the first World War, he was nightly on duty at the canteen run in the village Reading Room (now the village hall) for the benefit of the troops stationed at Bourne Park. Mr Wills was described as 'a man of charming manners and genial disposition', who was also a keen cricketer and a long-serving member of St Peter's Church choir. He died in 1944, two months before his 96th birthday. This brief look at his life illustrates how much Bridge village has always been at the centre of the lives of many of its residents. The illustration shows **Mr Wills** with his aunt (aged 100) and his two sisters. At this date the combined ages of the four in this long-lived family was 335 years.

Opposite the White Horse, on the site of the present neo-Georgian houses was a row of four tiny board cottages attached to Albert Terrace, known as Bean or Bean's Cottages, and adjacent to **Bridge Farm**. This, (known latterly, after the last owner, as 'Daddy Fagge's Farm') was the home farm of Blackmansbury and, before the Dissolution of the Monasteries, part of the land holdings of St Augustine's Abbey. At one time it was in the ownership of the Rev. R.H.Barham, author of the *Ingoldsby Legends*. Until its regrettable demolition in 1962, the farmhouse that stood here was a typical 15th century timber-framed Wealden hall house, originally with a central hall open to the roof, rooms on two levels on either



side and a jettied overhang. In the early 17th century, a great fireplace was added, and an upper floor inserted. Another timber-framed house had stood at the right-hand end of the building, but was demolished in the 18th century when the wagon entrance was blocked and the entrance to the yard was moved to the right. The house itself (clearly visible, along with the *White Horse*, in Schellincks' 1661 drawing) must have presented a very attractive appearance, and was a prestigious building with the style of vertical timbers known as close studding. It had a fine stairway of eight solid oak blocks of medieval date. At the rear was a medieval barn and cowsheds, probably also dating to the 15th century. In the mid 20th century, Captain Maslin, of Bridge's riding school, kept some of his horses at the farm. The fields behind, now the Western Avenue estate, were the usual venue for summer fêtes and similar village functions.

One of the oldest buildings remaining in Bridge is the late 15th or early 16th century timber-framed and jettied house which, according to a document of 1622 was perhaps an inn, or, from its outward appearance, 'commonly known as the "Ship"'. In the 18th century it was divided into two dwellings, and by the early 19th century it had become a row of four labourers' cottages known as '**Primrose Alley**', a pretty name belying the lowly character of its inhabitants, and proclaimed



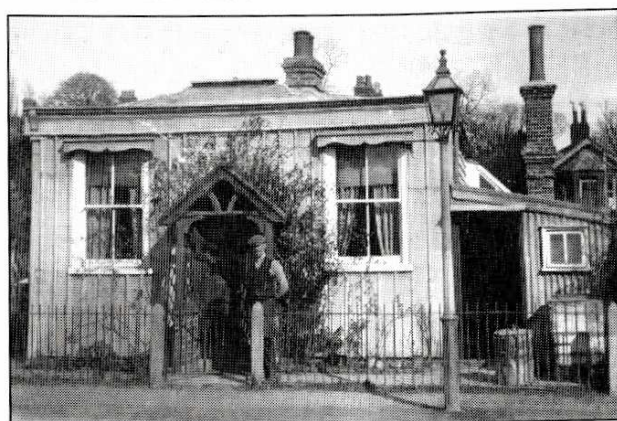
until the 1990's by a board affixed to the side of the house. The building attached to the side was a double oast, though by 1887 it had ceased to function as such. The brick infill between the timbers of the house ('nogging') is probably a later replacement of the wattle and daub of the original. The house was reconverted to two dwellings in 1969. It may be noted in this regard that the house beside the Ford in Mill Lane, Bridgeford House, erected as a row of three cottages in the early 19th century, was collectively known as 'Bricknoggin'.

Correspondence survives between Lady Conyngham's solicitor and her agent, prompted by a villagers' petition, concerning the purchase, from the Canterbury Wesleyan Trustees, of a house, garden and Methodist chapel at Bridge for £270. The sale involved difficult negotiations regarding the tenants' rights. A group of Primitive Methodists (or 'Ranters') rented the chapel at £4 per annum. These may be defined as a 'people of a joyous and evangelical disposition', rather than rowdy, but they apparently 'disturbed the whole neighbourhood', as they were accustomed to sing through the streets on



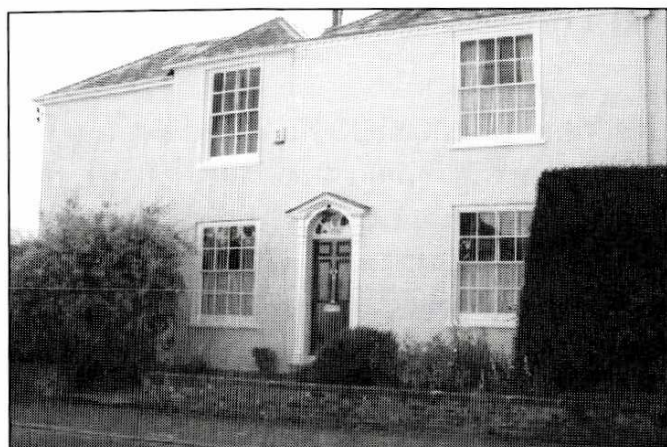
their way home from services. The vicar, the Rev. Stevenson, had drawn the Wesleyan Methodists back into the Anglican fold. When agreement was finally reached on the sale, the agent stated that he had been informed that the 'Wesleyans possess a million's worth of property in this country . . . so they are quite indifferent about the matter'! Lady Conyngham agreed to a more sober use of the erstwhile chapel as 'a lecture room or a village literary institution, for the improvements of the rising

generation'. This is now the **village hall**. The Primitive Methodists retired to a private house until they were able to erect their **own chapel** in Dering Road in 1868, which they used until the first decade of the 20th century. It then became a private house, and was demolished in 1951.



The reading room and library was enlarged in 1878 for the benefit of the villagers, to twice its size (and including the additional comfort of a fireplace), to celebrate the coming of age of Marquess Conyngham's heir, Lord Mount Charles. In the 1st World War, when troops were camped at the top of Bridge Hill, the hall was used as a military canteen. In 1952, the hall was given to the villagers by the Conyngham estate on a 50-year lease at a peppercorn rent of 6d per year, and was eventually bought from the Conyngham Estate in 1982.

The left-hand house of the early 19th century pair adjacent to Union Road may justifiably be called the '**doctor's house**'. Originally symmetrical with the other, this house has been extended twice, to accommodate the requirements of the village doctors, five of whom lived here in turn for a



period of over 130 years. The earliest record we have of a doctor in Bridge is of Amelius Sicard, born in Blackheath 12 June 1809, the son of a refugee from revolutionary France, and of the dynasty of Lautrec, who was 'major-domo' in the household of Princess Caroline of Brunswick. Amelius took on the practice in Bridge in 1832, aged 23, and was the village doctor for 48

years. Sicard's tombstone in St Peter's churchyard claims him to have been a 'beloved physician to rich and poor', and his friends paid for a wall tablet and the glazing of the west window in the church. Charles Schön, a British subject born in the Grand Duchy of Baden, followed Sicard. He died in 1899, to be succeeded by Robert Moorhead, from London, and then in 1906 by Arthur Wilson, born in Dublin, and described as 'a small man with a big heart, an Irishman's sense of humour and a characteristic laugh'. He was also said, perhaps more unfortunately, to have been unable to restrain a nervous giggle, even in the gravest circumstances.

Dr Roger Hunter was also a graduate of Trinity College Dublin, and came to the village with his wife in 1937. They bought the house and practice, together with the carriage house and stables. Private patients entered by the front door and waited in the dining room. 'Panel' patients entered at the rear via the garden door which until the 1990's bore the legend 'surgery'. Until recently, the old butler's pantry survived, as did the wine and apple store. In the 1970s, restoration work took place and the pediment was removed. The house is hung with mathematical tiles, which were renovated in 1999. The upper tiles are hung in the traditional manner on timber laths, whereas the lower ones are fixed in plaster. Dr Hunter's generosity allowed for the building of an extension to the village hall. He died in 1988, and his widow remained in the house until her death.

Dr William Russell, who succeeded Dr Hunter, set up his practice in Green Court, and on his sudden death in 1988 the practice was assumed by Dr Mark Jones, who was instrumental in establishing the new Health Centre in Patricxbourne Road. It is remarkable that the village has until recently had no more than six doctors in over 170 years.

*partly* The late 18th century pair of cottages now used as the Post Office are known from earlier documents as occupying 'Chapel Yard'. This name appears to be derived from the fact that the building backs on to the site of the Primitive Methodist chapel, and that it comprised the yard belonging to Frederick Colegate (1790-1877), a prominent local builder, who in all probability erected Alexandra House (next to Rogers Garage, with workshops salvaged from South Canterbury Station on the Elham Valley Railway line). This house is listed in 1891 as 'High Street Junior School' and



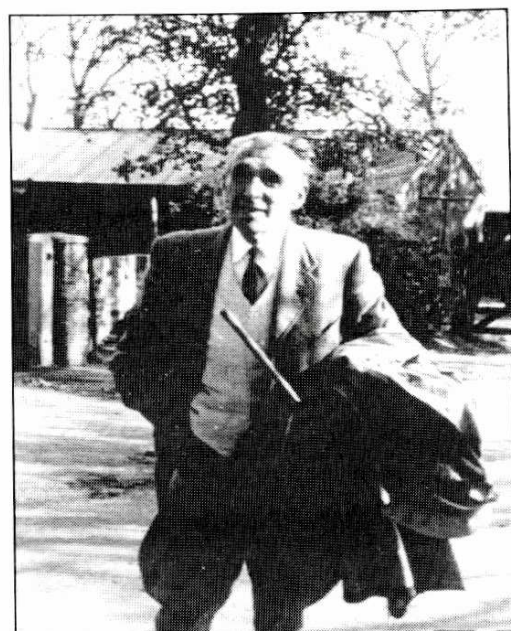
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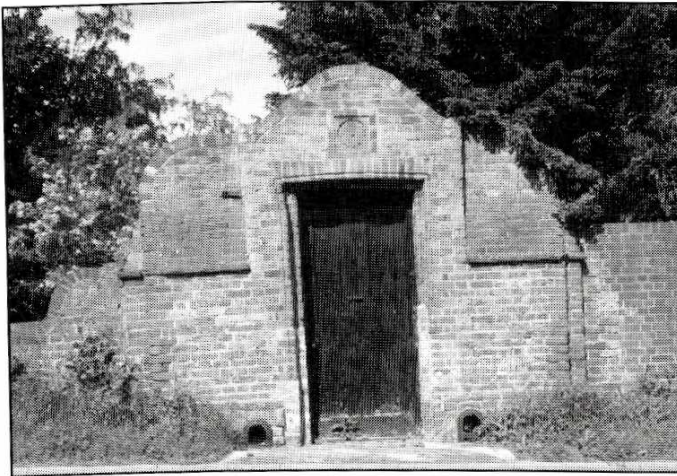
again in 1901 as a 'Private School'. The school survived until at least 1913, with Elizabeth Williams (Colegate's granddaughter) as the principal. In 1918, Miss M Bedingfield is listed as offering 'apartments' in the house, and by 1940, Alfred Hunt was running a laundry. A.W. Rogers Garage was built in 1924 on the site of a woodyard, belonging to G. Cowell. On the other side of the garage are two late 17th century cottages (?1693), while opposite is a **pair of cottages** (now one) which may well lay claim to being the oldest in the village, adjacent to BelleVue Terrace (late 19th century).



Beyond Albany Terrace lie Vine Cottages (mid 19th century), and then the semi-detached Victorian houses opposite the current post office, built on land bought in 1879 by Thomas Sargent, who is listed as a builder in the 1881 census. The houses were called respectively **Weston and Sefton Villas**. The Maslin family lived at 7 High Street (Sefton villas) for many years in the 20th century. The engaging **Captain Maslin** is remembered by many, and it is said that he 'could charm the birds from the trees'. He ran the local stables, and taught numerous children in the area to ride. There was a paddock behind Sefton Villas, where some of his horses were grazed. During the second World War, 1 High Street (Weston Villas) was requisitioned by the army, and after the war was used for some time as offices by Bridge and Blean Rural District Council.

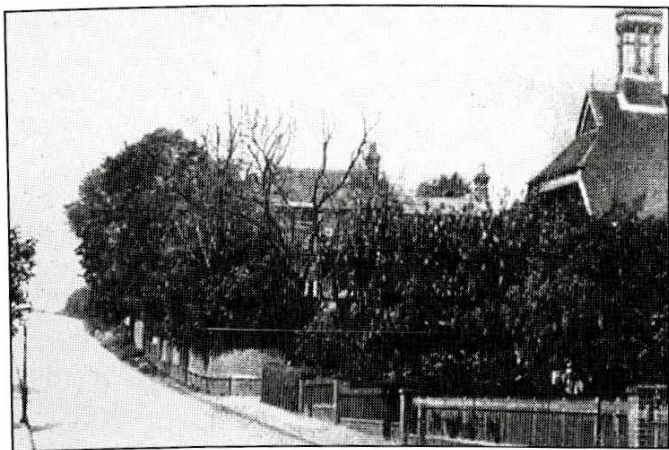


The fact that the **gateway** opposite Dering Road and the elegant Portland Terrace stands level with the main road suggests that it postdates the grading



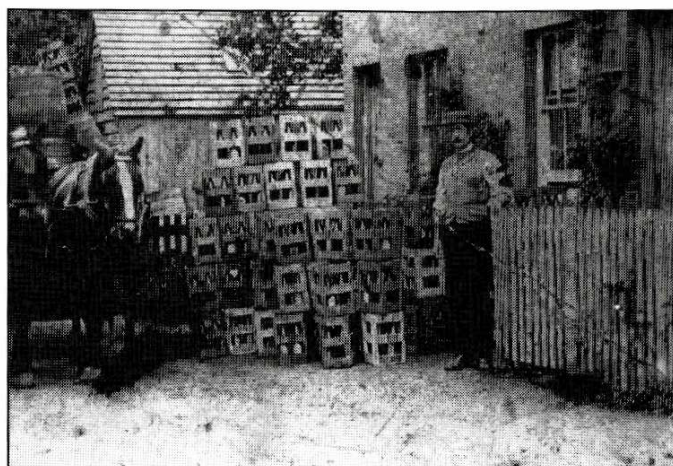
works of the 1820's. It bears a striking stylistic similarity to the entry to Patricbourne Old Vicarage. This gateway is a relic of a large 19th century house, known as 'Hillside'. Further evidence of its existence may be glimpsed in the garden behind the door, where parts of the tiled floor of a glazed passageway to the house proper still survives. 'Hillside' replaced a much earlier building, the now vanished 'Oliver's Court'. The present house, beyond the gateway (Beechmount), was once no more than the gardener's cottage and outbuildings of 'Hillside'.

*Just visible in the picture*



The 18th century cottage now known as 'Sunnyside', once stood level with the road, and was for a while a teashop. As a result of the turnpike roadworks, the cottage

found itself overlooked by a new embankment. Consequently the descent into Dering Road, once no more than a footpath, became steep. No. 2 Rose Cottages, down 'Aunt Betsy's Hill', was for long a 'beer house', popular among the soldiery during the first World War as 'Prickett's off-licence'. The Prickett family subsequently took over the village shop, an early 19th century infill structure next to the village hall, later converted to equestrian supplies.



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Dering Road and Filmer Road (named after two prominent Kentish families) form the bulk of an early estate development in Bridge dating from the 1860's, when the field forming the gap between the Union Workhouse and the High Street was sold off as individual plots after the Marchioness Conyngham's death. Not all were built on at the time: some were incorporated into the gardens of pre-existing properties (notably, for instance, the 'doctor's'). Dering Road in particular probably commemorates Colonel Cholmley Dering, younger brother of Sir



Edward Dering, 7th baronet of Surrenden Dering, Pluckley. Dering raised and commanded the Duke of York's Own New Romney Fencible Cavalry in 1794, and served with the regiment in Ireland, winning the thanks of the Lord Lieutenant of the county and both houses of parliament. Cholmley Dering bought Howletts from the builder (Isaac Baugh) in 1799, but on the death of his brother Edward, became the guardian of his brother's infant son and moved to Pluckley. He sold Howletts in c.1816 to George Gipps, son and heir to one of the founders of the Canterbury Bank.

The **Union workhouse** in Bridge was erected in 1835 following the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act 1834, at a cost of £4,376 by Thomas Finch

Cozens, one of the original trustees of the Methodist chapel. This Act abolished outdoor relief to the able-bodied poor who, on applying for aid, were to be offered maintenance in a workhouse. To deter people from seeking relief, life was to be made as unpleasant as possible. Married couples were separated and children taken from their parents. The only contact allowed



was in the chapel or refectory, and then infrequently. Responsibility for the poor law passed into the hands of three Poor Law Commissioners. The country was divided into Poor Law Unions, each with a Board of Guardians, and composed of several parishes. Bridge Poor Law Union had 22 parishes under the authority of 22 guardians, four ex-officio guardians, surgeons, a relieving officer and a clerk. The parishes included were Adisham, Barham, Bekesbourne, Bishopsbourne, Bridge, Chartham, Fordwich, Harbledown, Upper Hardres, Lower Hardres, Ickham, Kingston, Littlebourne, Nackington, Patrixbourne, Petham, Stodmarsh, Thanington, Waltham, Westgate-Without, Wickhambreaux and Womenswold. The first meeting of the Bridge Union Board of Guardians was held on 22 April 1835 at the White Horse Inn. The master was known as the Governor and his wife the Governess. They were paid a joint salary of £80. The average weekly cost of indoor paupers by 1847 was 3s.4d (17p). Tramps were accommodated in a separate building next to the main workhouse (now demolished) where the sleeping accommodation was basic. There was also a mortuary. In 1840, one family was given £4 to assist them to emigrate, a practice not uncommon at the time. Unmarried women 'lying in' were admitted, but punished if it was to be their second

child. Clothing grants were issued and medical aid given. Children received education, and boys were often apprenticed as sweeps, brick-layers, hop growers, etc. A survey of census returns for Bridge shows that the workhouse population was about 15-20% of the total, and consisted predominantly of the aged and infirm, and young women with children. The Union building was well-constructed, on the quadrangle pattern of most contemporary workhouses, with an entrance gate and offices, a chapel in the centre, a porter's lodge, cook's house and exercise yard, together with three acres of garden. The red bricks of the Union building were described in vol IX of Igglesden's *Saunters Through Kent* as giving 'an appearance of cheerfulness, while the garden plots on either side of the entrance are generally a blaze of flowers'. The evidence indicates that the Guardians of the Bridge Union, while careful over financial matters, were conscientious in executing their duties and not unduly harsh. The buildings later became a home for the elderly and nursing home (The Close), before being converted into housing in the nineteen eighties, when the New Close was built in Conyngham Lane in the grounds of the new school.

Six mills are mentioned in the Domesday survey of 1086 within the parish of Patribourne (which in effect included Bridge). These were certainly water-mills, one of which was probably sited where Bridge Place now stands: the present artificial course of the Nailbourne indicates this. At a much later date (first recorded on Symondson's map of 1596) a post-mill was erected on the brow of Bridgedown within Patribourne parish. Milling was a high value but



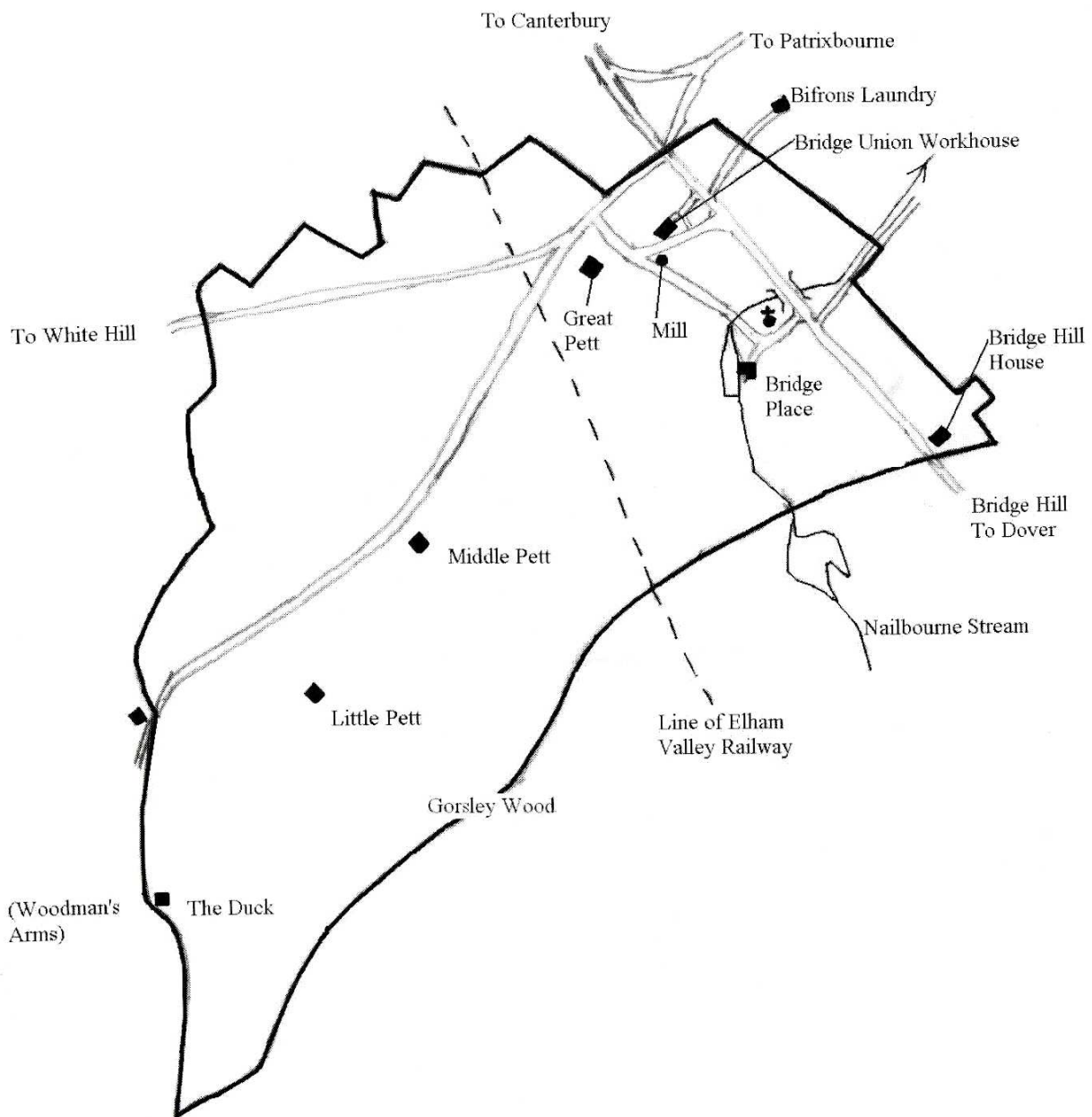
also high risk business: many were the mills that burned down, due to the easily combustible nature of flour dust. The *Kentish Gazette* in 1808 records a different risk:

MILL ROBBED . . . in the night of the 30th November, the Mill belonging to John Fagg, on Bridge Hill, was broke open by forcing the hinges of the door. . . and a Quantity of flour with TWO SACKS marked 'J.Fagg, Bridge Mill' were stolen thereout and traced for about half a mile across the fields . . .

This mill was dismantled in about 1818 and soon after another was erected in 'Three Corner Meadow' at the junction of what were to become Mill Lane and Union Road on a spot now occupied by a large oil tank. This was by now probably a **smock mill**, built by James Ashenden, to process corn for local farmers. The miller's house stood at right angles to the road so

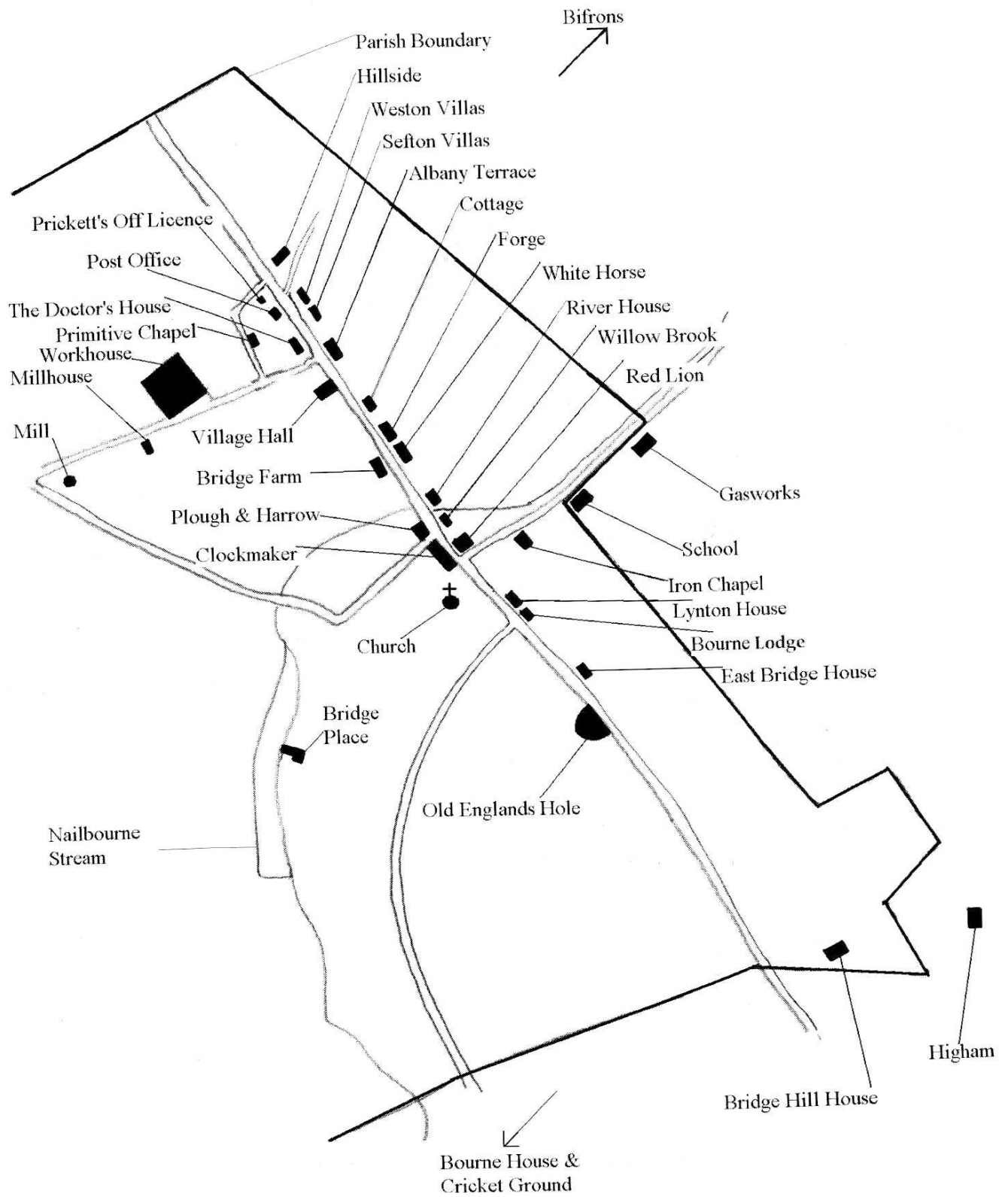


that the miller could not only look out for robbers, but also keep an eye on the working of the mill. Thomas Johnson was the miller from 1832 until his death in 1856, and the *Folkestone Herald* of March 1933 describes 'the figure of the dusty miller' as 'a familiar sight in the village, for his practice was to deliver flour for his customers personally, his method of transport being the back of a donkey'. The Johnsons later went on to run Barton Mill in Canterbury. From 1859 to 1879 the miller was George Fryer, who was succeeded by William White. By the 1890's industrial milling was fast overtaking the traditional method. Mr White installed a steam engine, and his successor William Mainwaring an oil engine, but the inevitable could not be put off. Wind power was abandoned in 1907, and the sweeps were removed. Flour production by whatever means was given up during the first world war, and the body of the mill began slowly to decay. By 1933 the site was being used as a coal yard, which then was taken over as an oil depot. The remains of the mill (still containing most of the gear) were finally demolished on Friday 15th October 1954. If it had survived perhaps another 15 years it might have benefited from the revival of the heritage industry. But an age which had allowed the destruction of Bridge Farm had no time for an old windmill.



*The shape of Bridge Parish prior to 1984*

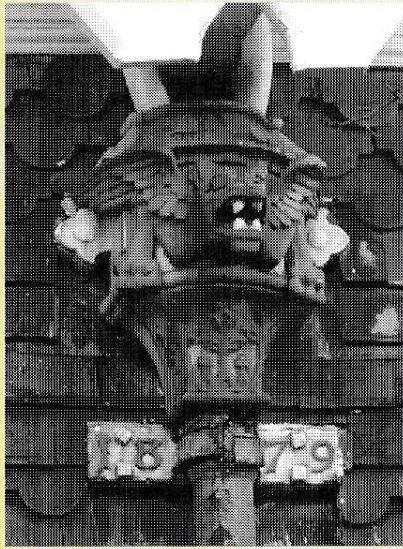
# THE VILLAGE OF BRIDGE



*Sketch map of the locations referred to in the tour of Bridge*

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS:

	Page		Page
Bridge Street in 1661	Frontispiece	Clock by Hardeman	22
The Bridge	3	The Plough and Harrow	22
Old England's Hole	4	The early fire-brigade	22
The water-splash	6	Fire engine CE 1037	23
The grocer's demolished	7	Fireman Fenn's Funeral 1910	23
By-pass celebrations	7	Fire-damaged fish shop	23
Bridge Farm	8	River House	24
Price's grocers	9	Temperance Hotel garden	24
Edwards butcher	9	The White Horse	24
Tobacconist & Hairdresser	9	The old forge	25
Bridge Place today	10	Albany Terrace	25
A.Ocker: Bridge Place c. 1670	10	Charles Wills & family	26
Bourse House	11	Bridge Farm structural drawing	26
Matthew & Fanny Bell motif	13	Primrose Alley ('The Ship')	27
Bourne Park cricket ground	13	Village Hall	28
Bridge Church today	14	Primitive Methodist Chapel	28
Bridge Church before 1860	14	'The doctor's house'	28
Bifrons c. 1710	15	The Post office	29
Bifrons c. 1800	15	Frederick Colegate gravestone	30
Bifrons c. 1900	16	Cottages, perhaps late 15th c.	30
Higham	17	Weston & Sefton Villas	30
Bridge Hill House	17	Captain Maslin	30
East Bridge House	18	Entrance to Hill House	31
Bourne Lodge	18	Hill House	31
Lynton House	19	Prickett's Off-licence	31
The Red Lion	19	The Union Workhouse	32
The Iron (Wesleyan) Chapel	20	The Windmill	33
The School	21	The Mill house	34



**Subject:** A Brief Historical Tour  
**From:** Mickle Print (sales@mickleprint.com)  
**To:** mmraraty@btinternet.com;  
**Date:** Wednesday, 21 May 2014, 13:04

Hi Maurice,

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I hope this all makes sense but should you require anything further please do not hesitate to contact me.

Very best wishes,

Tim

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