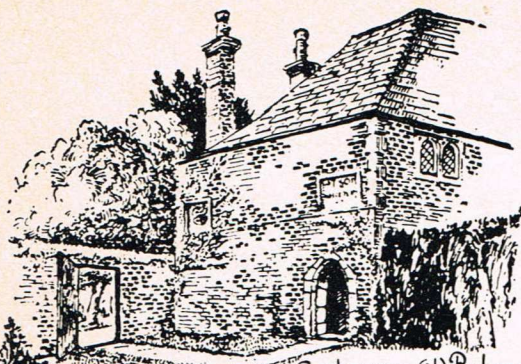




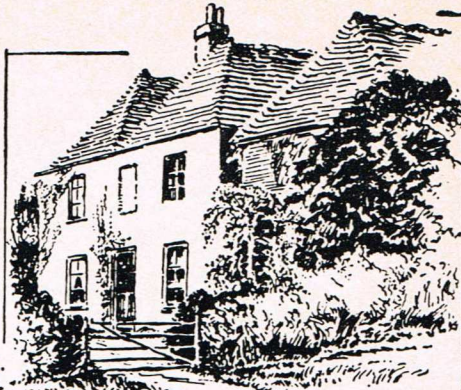
PATRIXBOURNE
with BRIDGE &
BEKESBOURNE

Fifty Years Ago

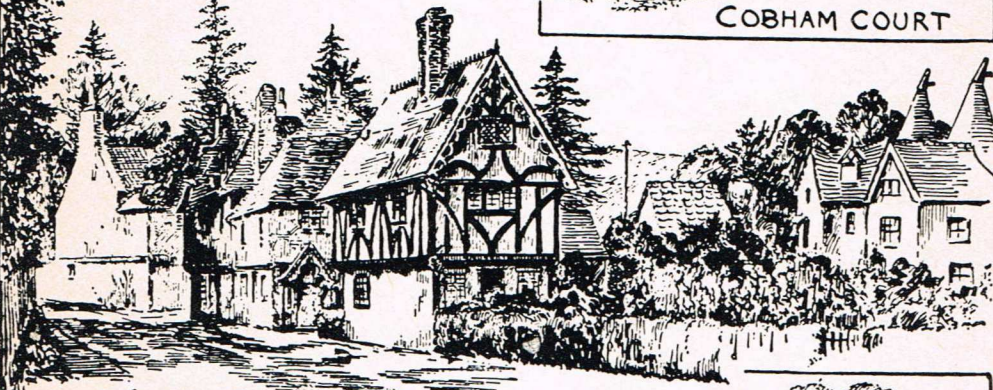
A description of the villages of Bridge, Patixbourne and Bekesbourne
taken from *Saunters through Kent with Pen and Pencil*, written by
Charles Igglesden, and published fifty years ago



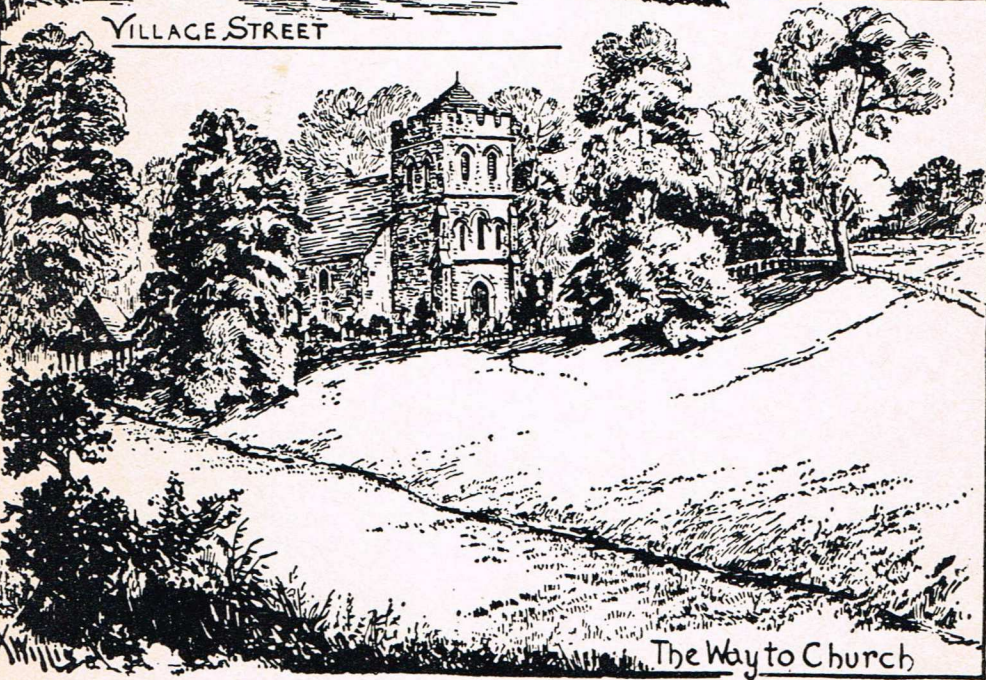
Gateway Old Palace



COBHAM COURT



VILLAGE STREET



The Way to Church

BEKESBOURNE



HERE is a difficult village to locate. You naturally walk towards the church, which stands on an eminence, or rather on the slope of a hill, but when you reach the road close by you see no village, no suggestion of a street. Hasted tells us that in his day, a hundred and fifty years ago, "the village consists of only five houses." Those houses, all residences and farmsteads, remain, but some distance away evidence of a real village and a few old houses can be found. These Hasted must have missed.

The traveller of to-day might also be excused for mistaking the street as a part of Bekesbourne, for it is close, very close, to its neighbour, Patrixbourne. As a matter of fact, only the high road separates them, and when you turn a corner and see the cluster of houses you do not realise that on one side you are in Bekesbourne and on the other side in Patrixbourne, with the glorious trees that rise up in Bifrons Park and spread their branches across the road. This road is a portion of the Pilgrims' Way which ran from Dover to Canterbury, and you can still follow it without a break. In some places it ceases to be an actual road, becoming a mere bridle-path in the woods, but even here it is possible to ride a bicycle.

The mention of the Pilgrims' Way takes back our thoughts to centuries ago, when up by the church stood a magnificent archbishop's palace. But before that we find the village mentioned in Domesday, when the name was Livingsbourne, because a Saxon chieftain named Levine possessed the manor. Like most of the property in this part of Kent, Odo, the Bishop of Bayeux, afterwards became the owner, and, following precedent, the Crown took over the property when the Bishop fell into disgrace. But I shall have more to say about these ancient times when describing the Old Palace which stands near the church.

Yes, the so-called street of Bekesbourne is a beautiful spot of the sylvan type, for even on the side of the road which belongs to that parish, trees, shrubs and flowers grow among the houses. From whichever end you approach it the view is truly Kentish, for we have mighty trees rising out of the park, with Patribourne church nestling in a wreath of wide-spreading branches. Beyond are the pastured Downs as a background, and standing near by are oasthouses that have alas! become a mere reminiscence of the past when hops were grown in great abundance hereabouts. At the end of the street is a tiny triangle with a grass floor, from which rises a tall conifer shrub, which the villagers tell you is hundreds of years old. Let them rest happy in their pride. Anyway, it is a glorious specimen of a Wellingtonia not as old as they say.

You cannot miss the artistically-shaped Bifrons Cottage with its closely-cropped yews in the garden. How they love to train trees to all sorts of shapes in this part of Kent! And then opposite is a house where Tudor origin is evident in its fine gable and overhang on one side, and at the other end a chimney-stack rising above a gable-shaped wall. Seventeenth-century bricks are everywhere, even in the tall garden walls. And this reminds us of the hopelessness of getting these old walls erected now-a-days owing to the enormous cost. What treasures they have become! And yet so frequently I see them bare of wall fruit by owners who fail to appreciate their value. I recently saw a Kentish garden surrounded by a brick wall no less than twelve feet high and its entire length fifteen hundred feet. Three hundred years ago it was built and, according to an old account, had cost £71 2s. 2d. What would be the expense to-day? And yet on the whole stretch of this superb garden wall I noticed only three ancient pear trees which might have been planted when the wall was built, so crusted were the stems and so worn out and unfertile their branches.

What a charming picture is made by that range of little houses, in the midst of which nestles the general shop of the village, with its quaint gable ornamented with a carved bargeboard. The large building at one end is older than it looks, for its overhang has been encased and its walls covered with mathematical tiles. On one of the buildings is the date 1699. Not far away, and standing isolated although flush with the road, is a half-timbered house, now divided into two dwellings and known as Elephant Cottage and

Lion Cottage from the carved corner brackets. In one case we see the head and shoulders of an elephant and in the other case a full-length lion, while other designs represent human heads. And so we stroll along the old street, along which the Canterbury pilgrims once pranced on their palfreys or struggled to keep up the pace on foot.

On one side of us are cottages with large gardens in front—gardens with a cabbage patch in the centre, but fringed by flower borders ablaze with all the homely old blossoms we treasure as the special pride of our Kentish villages—Michaelmas daisies, dahlias and chrysanthemums, with a little rose tree proudly growing out of a high standard stem. This I saw in the autumn-time. And then—the coloured leaves of the trees opposite, from flaring flame hue to every orange and yellow tint, and a few still deep green with a tinge of the blue of the sky peeping through.

A narrow road leads from one end of the village to the church, but the usual approach is from the railway station and the viaduct. Along this road we find a few modern houses, but thus far they are not crowded; then past the modern rectory and a halt on a small bridge, erected in 1830, that spans the Nailbourne, sometimes in flood and overflowing its banks and at other times with its bed as dry as a bone. This is a tributary of the remarkable Nailbourne that rises at certain periods in the Elham and Alkham valleys. (This Nailbourne is fully described in Volume II. of the "Saunter Through Kent" under the heading of Elham.)

No road leads to the church and you approach it along the footpath of a hill, similar to the entrance to the church of Reading Street in the Isle of Oxney. And here I might mention a local superstition which I unearthed at Reading Street. Here it is: Of necessity the corpse had to be lifted over the gate when a funeral took place, and on the return of the mourners they stuck a pin in the gate over which the body of their friend had been carried. It gave future happiness to the dead and prevented bad luck from befalling the living. I asked an old Bekesbourne inhabitant if the same superstition was carried out during the funerals in his churchyard, but he replied, "I think I heard of some rubbish of that sort, but we are too sensible to think of doing it now."

As you ascend by a green path the slope in the meadow the beautiful position of the church of St. Peter is impressive, and the

modern lych-gate is appropriately placed. On a carved inscription you are told that it was erected in 1870 in memory of George Gipps, of Howletts. Passing through the gate you find several stone steps leading to the porch, which is undoubtedly the most precious possession of the church. It is of Norman date and consists of two shafts with carved capitals. The corbels are human faces. Above the cylindrical mouldings is a chevron design, while the outer moulding is ornamented with nail-head design. The fool who wishes to perpetuate his memory has been at work on this doorway with wondrous industry. And the breed must have lasted many generations, for we find initials and dates cut into the masonry as far back as 1611 and as recently as the present century.

A wall around the church shows that restoration has been freely carried out; as a matter of fact, it was started in 1881 and continued for nine years, the fabric being in such a dilapidated state that the work was costly and the parish not rich enough to raise all the money at once. Happily, the Gipps family came to the rescue and gave great financial assistance. The upper part of the tower was almost re-built, and all the mullions of the windows save those in the chancel are new. The walls are of flint and superbly built, but a transept was added in 1876, unfortunately of brick on one side and of plaster on the other, and it is quite out of keeping with the rest of the building. Two long, narrow original lancets are to be seen at the east end and a smaller one in the other walls of the chancel, but two Norman lancets have been blocked up.

The churchyard is a spacious one to-day, but not so long ago it was very restricted. So the parishioners made representations to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, who purchased a plot of land adjoining, but there was not a farthing in the coffers to pay for laying out the new bit of God's Acre. Not to be beaten, the men of the parish determined to carry out the work themselves. They began in September and worked every evening and every Saturday afternoon, and when the day of consecration by the Bishop of Dover arrived, what pride was in their hearts! They had completed their work—footpaths, the turf brought into cultivation, and a neat iron fencing placed around it all. Here in the centre of the new churchyard is the stone cross surrounded by a box hedge containing the names of Bekesbourne heroes who died in the Great War:—

Captain W. Howard, W. T. Goldup, P. Moore, F. W. Kingsford, S. J. Bushell, A. Bean, W. Gibbs, H. Hoare, J. Knight, W. C. V. Newport, G. E. Cage and J. Mepsted.

A dark little church is St. Peter's, for the windows are few and small, with deeply-tinted stained glass. You can enter either by the west door under the tower or from the Norman doorway in the north; but whichever way you walk inside you are struck by the darkness, the narrowness of the building and the flint walls. For there are no aisles or chapels—just the nave, the chancel and the modern transept, which is now used as a vestry. But there is something charming about the crudeness of these polished flints—they have nothing to hide by the aid of plaster. Here you see them just as the masons laid them centuries ago. And what arduous work with old-world tools!

The original Early English arch leading from the nave to the tower is acutely pointed, and the style of the chancel arch carries out the idea of the original one. It was entirely re-built as we see it to-day during the restoration which commenced in 1881, and at that time the oak screen was placed here. The only other arch is the one that leads into the transept, and this is wooden with ornamental capitals. Above the altar are two beautiful, long, narrow lancets, and in three niches large carved figures. Other things to notice are a remarkable double piscina and a benitier. The piscina is in the chancel and consists of two bowls, with a shaft, obviously of later date, running up between them. The benitier is just within the entrance on the north side of the nave and, although somewhat rough in formation, has a good ogeed head. All the equipment of the church—choir stalls, pulpit, lectern and font—is modern, but the deeply-splayed thirteenth-century windows of the chancel are worthy specimens of the style of the Early English period.

There are only two brasses in the church, both mere inscriptions. One is dated 1593 and commemorates Henry Porredge, with Latin verses; the other records the death in 1600 of Margaret, daughter of John Coppin, wife of Mark Cullinge. It states that she left one son named Mark and one daughter named Katherine.

The west window was erected by the widow of George Gipps, of Howletts, who died in 1883. The two lancets in the east end of the chancel were placed there in memory of their parents by the children of George and Jane Gipps. On the south wall of the

chancel is a window erected in 1885 by George Bowdler Gipps "in thankful remembrance of a special mercy." The two-light window on the same side of the chancel was erected in 1893 to the memory of David Thomas Smith, churchwarden. On the north chancel wall is a lancet erected to the memory of three members of the Gardner family—Austen, Harriett and Reginald Charles—all of whom died between 1853 and 1860. Also in this wall is a lancet erected in 1886 to Johannis Mears. The coloured windows in the nave are erected as follows:—A two-light window to William and Elizabeth Sharp and their son William, in 1886; a three-light window to the memory of Eliza Sargent in 1890; a single-light window to Mary Wardell and Mary Ramsay, erected in 1883; a window of two lights to James Craiqie Robertson, fourteen years vicar of the parish and late Canon of Canterbury Cathedral; and a three-light window dedicated to Jane Gipps, the younger, the date being 1891.

On the walls are many mural tablets, far more than in most village churches, and they recall the names of many local worthies. Here is the list:—To the children of the Honble. and Rev. Wm. Eden and Anna Maria Dowager Baroness Grey de Ruthyn; to the Hon. and Rev. Wm. Eden, who died in 1859, and his widow, Anna Maria Lady Grey de Ruthyn, who died in 1875; to the Rev. William Bedford, fifty-seven years vicar of the parish and fifty-six years rector of Smarden (1783); to Isabella May Wardell, seventeen years organist, the memorial having been placed here by many of her friends in 1926; to Sir Thomas Pym Hales, Bart. (1773), representative of the Port of Dover; to Annae Battely, with a Latin inscription; to Sir Philip Hales, Bart., at whose death, in 1824, the title became extinct, and also his wife, Dame Elizabeth Hales, who died in 1833, and their only child, Elizabeth; to Lady Yates, relict of the late Mr. Justice Yates and of Dr. Thomas, Bishop of Rochester, her death occurring in 1808; to Robert Peckham, late of Archbishop's Palace (1795); to Richard Fogg, Esq., "descended of the ancient family of Foggs of this county. He faithfully served King Charles the First as captain of several of his men-of-war at sea, and he died in 1681"; to Henry John Wardell, seventeen years vicar of Bekesbourne, erected by his parishioners and friends in 1893; to Commander George Gipps, R.N., who died in 1916, the stone having been placed by his sisters, Edith Weir and Maud Hill; and to John Peckham, Esq., who died in 1792 and was descended from the ancient family of the Peckhams, of Chart Sutton.

By the pulpit is a tablet to the memory of Norman Ramsay, Second Lieutenant, 16th Battalion Rifle Brigade, youngest son of Robert Ramsay, of Howletts, killed in action in France, 1916. This pulpit was erected by his brothers and sisters in 1921. Half hidden by the organ is a memorial to Philippi Branden. An inscription on a brass tablet on the south wall reads as follows:—"This church consecrated to the Glory of God in XII. Century was restored A.D. 1881-1890 chiefly by Jane Gipps the younger Who also gave 6 bells and by other members of her family—Henry John Wardell, M.A., Vicar." Two other brass tablets are to the memory of Richard Nelson Bendyshe in 1915, and to Cuthbert Gardner and Florence Balleine, the date being 1895.

At the last restoration a fine monument was removed from another part of the church and placed in the tower wall. It is of marble and the figure of a knight in armour is represented as kneeling on a cushion at a prayer desk. It is a very fine bit of carving. Sir Henry Palmer, to whom this memorial was erected, died in 1611 after living at Cobham Court for many years and becoming a leading man in this part of the county.

In addition to the church, Bekesbourne, so strangely neglected by historians and equally unknown to the average wayfarer owing to its obscure position, can boast of much old-world history. In fact, this tiny inland hamlet was a limb of the Cinque Ports and, more strangely still, connected with Hastings, which is not a Kent port. As such it was compelled to contribute men or money to the Cinque Ports' fleet, and in the thirteenth century it provided one ship. One peculiarity of its position was that Bekesbourne was outside the police jurisdiction of the county of Kent, and malefactors at one time had to take their trial at Hastings. What was the effect of this law? Felons and others would rush to the place as a sort of sanctuary, for no other than the Hastings authorities dare arrest them. At last the Mayor of Hastings hit upon a happy solution—he appointed a leading inhabitant of Bekesbourne as his deputy mayor, and this important personage was empowered to try prisoners at the Court House, now known as Cobham Court. To be practical one of the Mayors of Hastings at last refused to appoint his deputy of Bekesbourne, and as years passed the parish became merged into the police administration of Kent. But during its existence as a limb of Hastings it came into notoriety when in the

year 1597 Lord Cobham, Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, held the Court of Shepway at Bekesbourne, much to the annoyance of the representatives of the important ports along the coast.

Adjoining the churchyard is the actual Court House, known as Cobham Court and the property of Miss Hordern, J.P. The place originally belonged to the family of Cobham, through whom it took its name, and a member of that family was in possession in the reign of Edward the Third. His granddaughter subsequently became possessed of it and she had no less than five husbands, and only one child—a daughter by her second husband. A subsequent owner was the famous Lord Cobham who was beheaded for high treason, and in consequence the property was forfeited to the King, who sold it to the Palmers. As I have already said, Cobham Court was used as the Court House of the Deputy Mayor of Hastings when the police jurisdiction was under the control of that Cinque Port, and a large panelled room is obviously the spot where the court was held. Much of the house is apparently new, but its modern front hides a Tudor building, for bricks of this period can be traced in its walls, as well as in the walls of the fine old garden.

Among other residences in Bekesbourne is Howletts, sometimes spelt "Owletts." It was the seat of the Hales family, but in 1787 Sir Philip Hales sold it to Isaac Baugh, who pulled down the whole structure and built another house close by, but not in the same parish, for it stands as a modern house at Well, in the parish of Iekham.

Close to the church and standing some distance back from the main road is a residence which takes the place of a magnificent palace used in far-off days by two Archbishops of Canterbury. It was the original manor house, and the first mention of the place is to be found in records made at the time of Henry the Third, when one William de Beke held it under King's service, his duty being to supply a ship for the monarch when he crossed the Channel. He was expected to be aboard on such occasions, but His Royal Highness excused him as he suffered from sea sickness. In the next reign the property was bought by Archbishop Chicheley, who gave it to Christ Church, Canterbury, and there is no doubt that it was used as an ecclesiastical residence, as we know that Prior Gulston during the reign of Henry the Fourth made several additions, including the erection of a chapel. Then came Archbishop

Cranmer, who determined to increase its size, and for this purpose demolished the partially-ruined Ford Manor at Hoath and used the material in the erection of a superb palace. It must have covered a vast extent of ground, for old foundations have been unearthed all around the present modern residence known as the Old Palace.

Here Archbishop Cranmer spent most of his time, especially when he realised that his star was falling. Scenting further trouble, he made his will and secreted it behind the wainscoting of the gallery. His successor, Archbishop Parker, also lived here and still further enlarged the palace, but died before his plans were completed. We next hear of the place during the great Civil War, the owner at that time being a strong supporter of Charles the First. The Cromwellian soldiers, advancing through Kent, made a special onslaught on the palace at Bekesbourne, for after pillaging it they pulled down practically the whole of the structure, excepting the chapel. After the Restoration repairs were carried out and it was found necessary to pull down the chapel owing to its dangerous condition, and in the church accounts we read the following:—"John Chambers, a stranger, was slain by the fall of a wall as he was pulling down the chapel belonging to ye Palace on the 1st day of February, 1658." The only portion left was a gate-house and a few minor offices.

For many years the house was a mere ruin, with a working farmer occupying one or two rooms, but one Robert Packham built the present residence at the close of the eighteenth century. In 1840, however, Frederick Wood opened it as a school "for the sons of noblemen, knights and gentry." Subsequently the Hon. Mrs. Bell, widow of Mr. Matthew Bell, of Bourne Park, and daughter of the late Sir William Hart-Dyke, Bart., lived there, but she disposed of the property.

The style of architecture is of no special period, being a plain building relieved by a castellated parapet. There are some grand trees on the lawns and the Nailbourne curls its way between the garden and the pastures in flood-time. But although the residence itself is comparatively modern, parts of the minor buildings of the old Palace remain. The most conspicuous is the original gate-house, standing just away from one end of the house, and past it went the roadway that led to the front of the Palace, which was on the opposite side to the entrance of to-day. Hasted made one of his

many mistakes when he states that this gate-house was demolished, for here you see it to-day—a square brick building of the very early Tudor period. The doorway is of stone, and windows at the side have also stone mullions deeply set in the walls of great thickness. On one wall are two stones let into the brickwork, on one of which is inscribed the arms of the See of Canterbury and Archbishop Parker, while on the other one is carved “A.D.—T.C.—1552” and underneath Archbishop Cranmer’s motto, “Nosce Teipsum et Deum.” Inside the building, which is now used as a residence, are to be seen some old beams, a chimney corner, and ancient stained glass in a window.

There is no doubt that this part of Kent was a vast settlement of the Romans, and every mile of land, if it could be dug up, would disclose remains of that period. When the railway was being made a remarkable wooden structure was discovered thirteen feet below the surface of the soil. A shaft had been made out of heavy beams, and below was a cavity no doubt used as a sepulchre. The timber, which had become jet black by age but had remained quite hard, formed a shaft three feet three inches in diameter. In the sepulchre were found several urns in which had been deposited the burnt bones of the dead. It is probable that it was the burial place of an important Roman and his family. Later on, close to the same spot, was found another shaft, but this was not composed of timber and was a mere hole dug in the ground. At the bottom were flints, but no human remains could be discovered.

Whispers only were heard during the Great War; you dare not speak about it. Like mushrooms, strange buildings sprang up in various parts of England, and especially just inland from the coast of Kent. Here were quartered our gallant airmen, ever watching for the approach of the enemy from across the Channel. No longer was Bekesbourne a peaceful little village, silent save for a passing train or motor, or the song of the ploughman and chirruping of birds. Sometimes at night the distracting buzzing of airplanes starting on a flight broke the silence and the old people of the village who had been left behind and the youngsters would listen in fear lest ill should befall these young heroes of the Air Force who had endeared themselves to everyone. On more than one occasion the Germans spotted the aerodrome, but the bombs they dropped just missed the hangars, the workshops and the quarters

of the garrison. Then came peace and the cluster of buildings was empty until bungalow dwellers found them out and formed the colony which lives there to-day. The huge hangar is used by the members of the Kent Flying Club.

Here at Bekesbourne I came across an old Kent superstition. In days gone by the village midwife provided two garments—a boy’s nightshirt and a girl’s nightgown.

“To be quite prepared if the child was a boy or girl?” I suggested to the dear old lady who was telling me the story.

“Next ‘zackly,” she replied. “I only put these clothes on just for a moment, just for luck. If it was a girl I puts on the boy’s shirt; if it was a boy I puts on the girl’s nightgown. It meant that when the boy growed up all the girls would fall in love with him, and the opposite with the girl—she’d have all the lads after her!”

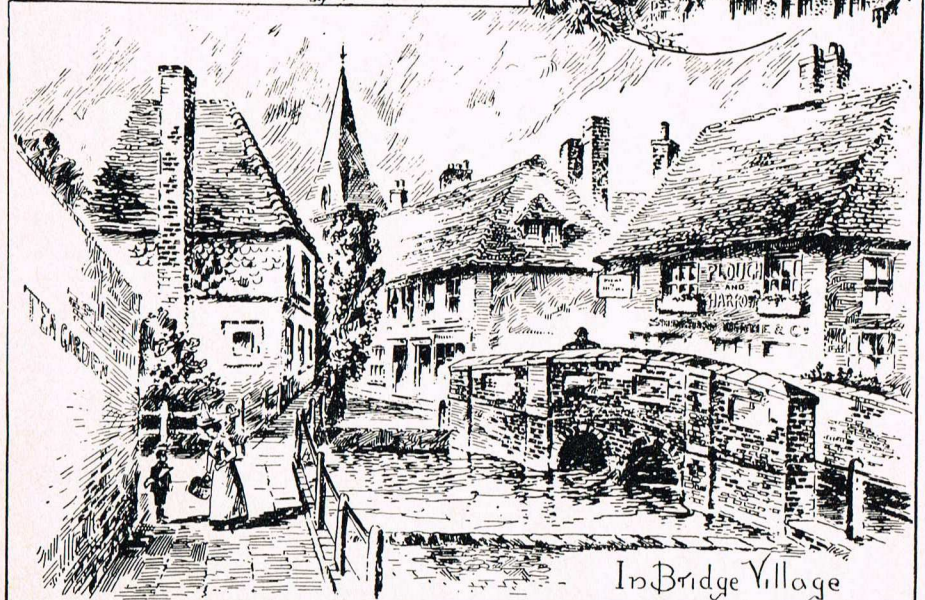




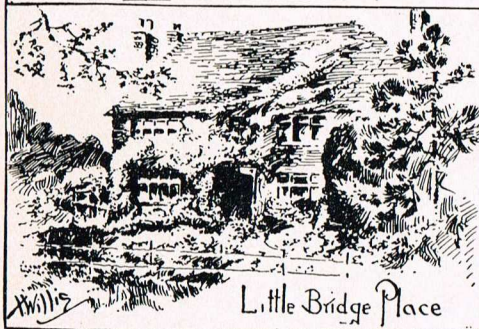
Natural Bridge
over Nailbourne



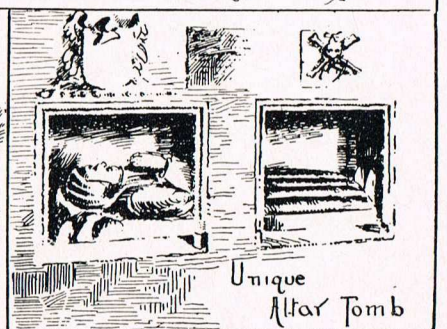
St Peter's
Church



In Bridge Village



Little Bridge Place



Unique
Altar Tomb

BRIDGE.



THE Romans were the cleverest road makers in the world. Many of those they laid some two thousand years ago are still in existence, or rather, their foundations survive, and no others of more recent make are equal to them in firmness, nor are they likely to prove as durable. And one of the most important of these old Roman roads is known as Watling Street, extending from Dover to London. On the run of this ancient highway stands the village of Bridge, just outside the cathedral city of Canterbury. What sights have passed this way in all those two thousand years! Here Roman legions marched, here came merchants from the south with pack horses laden with costly goods, here for hundreds of years have trod the feeble and smarting feet of pilgrims and the ancient mendicant and modern tramp; here have come horse-drawn vehicles, market carts, and luxuriously fitted carriages of the rich, and the modest caravan of the gipsy; here has resounded the stirring note of the silver trumpet of the Roman hosts and later from the horn of the guard of the London and Dover coach; and now the horn of the motor makes less noise, and not such sweet music, and the rubber-tyred wheels send up dense clouds of dust.

The little village street of Bridge has stood there all these years and seen all these passing sights. Yet to look at it now, it does not impress you with antiquity. The architect who takes a glimpse at the church will tell you that the Normans have left traces of their skill behind; but, beyond this, we see nothing to recall the centuries of the far past. And it is not pretentious of great beauty, as Kent villages go. The street is long, with houses mainly humble in appearance, and built without a vestige of architectural style.

Across the main street is a bridge, but when I was in the village last autumn it seemed a superfluous erection. There was the bed of a river but no water, save a few trickles that could not have the audacity to call themselves a stream. Weeds were growing in abundance and house refuse, broken pots and pans lay in the thick rank grass. Where was the water? Two months afterwards I was again at Bridge. Down the river bed came a sweeping torrent, washing away everything in its course, flooding fields with its overflow, inundating roadways along the Elham Valley as far as Littlebourne. It was the Nailbourne, one of those mysterious streams that suddenly rise and just as suddenly disappear. This one in the Elham Valley rises in a field at Ottinge, close to Lyminge and takes its course through the low-lying country until it joins another stream that rises at Lyminge and the two combine till they empty themselves into the river that has its source at Littlebourne and thence onward to join the Stour. In the Alkham valley another Nailbourne rises, and in various parts of England similar intermittent streams are to be found under the name of Winterbournes.

So, although the bridge and river cutting seems quite unnecessary at some periods, it is absolutely essential that they be in readiness to save flooding when the Nailbourne appears at Bridge. The old structure, built of stone and brick something over a hundred years ago, gives a touch of beauty to the scene at this end of the street. The arches are low and support the high road, while a wooden footbridge leads us along the path over another part of the hollow to a quaint little building now used as a dairy.

The parish church of St. Peter, once a chapel to the church of Patribourne—the living of the combined places is still one—stands at the extreme end of the village on a sunken piece of ground and surrounded by yews. It is compact in appearance, strictly neat and clean, its walls of black polished flint and its stone windows all being in such a perfect state of preservation that one might mistake it for a modern church. But the archæologist knows better. For, although the restoration in 1860 was so complete that much of the church was re-built, Norman work can still be seen outside in several places. The tower, situated at the south-western corner, is Norman in its lower part, but the shingled spire is modern. A unique stair turret projects on the south side, square in the lower part, but belted above, the latter shape giving it an Oriental character. Up in the belfry are three bells, two without any wording, but the third is inscribed

as follows:—ANE: MARIA: GRACIA: PLENA: DUS: TECU. This tenor bell is supposed to have been made as long ago as the fourteenth century by one William le Belyetre, of Canterbury. There are two Norman doorways, the smaller one in the north-east corner, by the side of the chancel, having deep chevron moulding that catches our eye as we walk down the hill towards the church. The west doorway is a good specimen, its fine moulding standing out in bold relief, but, unfortunately, the three heads—one in the centre and the other two supporting the hood—are battered. The shafts have carved capitals.

Entering the building the casual observer might imagine that it is modern, so trim and fresh are the walls and stonework. And much of it is comparatively modernized, the barrel roof of the nave and the timbered roofs of the aisles containing much new woodwork. Some of the piers of the arcades, themselves of Early English origin, have been altered. There are four of these arches dividing the nave from the north aisle, and the pieces which were once square have been replaced by two circular ones, crowned with floral capitals of Early English design. The arcade on the south side is of three bays and the three arches are fine specimens of Early English work. In the north aisle there is nothing to specially note, but in the south aisle the windows are peculiar, as the centre shafts project and stand out by themselves in front of the glass. One of these windows contains stained glass and was erected to the memory of May, wife of Major Farwell, of the 44th Regiment, and daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Winter, of Bridge Hill, who died at Madras in 1882. In the eastern wall of this aisle is a huge wheel window, while below are two Norman windows, deeply splayed and filled with stained glass.

By the light of the west coloured window of Perpendicular date, and erected to the memory of Dr. Amelius Sicard, who died in 1880, we notice an entrance to the vestry under the tower, with a fine stone arch, with its rich billet moulding, supported by grotesque heads. Another fine arch also gives entrance to the vestry from the south aisle. The font stands in the centre, a dark marble octagonal bowl being supported by eight shafts of the same material and surrounding a large centre one. At the head of the nave is a very handsome oak pulpit standing on a stone base.

To approach the chancel we walk up two steps, and on the wall are the treasures of the church. On a recess to the left is

the recumbent stone effigy of an ecclesiastic in robes, Macobus Kasey, vicar of Patricbourne, who died in 1512, and the strange feature is a bit of masonry or wall built right across the centre of the figure, dividing it in two. Above, let into the wall, is a mutilated Latin inscription and a hand with pointing finger at its side. Near by are marble tablets on the wall, one with a shield of arms and the other with the gruesome ornamentation of a skull and cross-bones and spade and mattock. Between, on a black stone slab, is this inscription:—

“JOANE THE SECOND DAUGHTER OF WALTER HARFLET OF BEAKESBOVRNE ESQ. THE FIRST WIFE OF SR. ARNOLD BRAEMS KNT. DEPARTED THIS LIFE THE 26 DAY OF JVLY 1635 AND LYETH BVRIED IN THE PARISH CHVRCH OF ST. MARIES DOVOR ERECTED TO HER LASTING MEMORY. ELIZABETH THE SECOND DAUGHTER OF SIR DUDLEY DIGGS OF CHILHAM CASTLE KNHT. MASTER OF THE ROYLES SECOND WIFE OF SIR ARNOLD BRAEMS KNHT. DEPARTED THIS LIFE THE 27TH DAY OF MAY 1643 AND LYETH BVRIED IN THE MIDLE OF THIS CHANCEL WHERE HER NAME IS ENGRAVEN AND FOR WHOM THIS MONVMENT IS ERECTED.”

An exquisite piece of Norman carving that was once the filling of an archway has also been reclaimed from the north wall of the chancel. There are two rows of subjects. Those in the upper range are too mutilated to be clearly made out, but the lower compartments represent the angel of the Lord expelling Adam and Eve from Paradise, with the words “Justitia Dei” on a label over their heads; the second, Adam and Eve on each side of the forbidden tree, with the Devil climbing up it in the shape of a cormorant; the third, Cain’s offering; the fourth, Abel’s offering, with the flames and smoke rising from the sacrificial pile; and the fifth, Cain slaying his brother. Above this old bit of carving is a seventeenth century painting on copper of Robert Bargrave. On the opposite wall is some more stone carving in the shape of scrolls, possibly taken from some old tombstones or slabs and inserted in their present position quite recently. The east window that lights the chancel is of stained glass and represents scenes in the life of Christ, but a window of greater antiquity is the small one in the north aisle, deeply-splayed, containing stained glass and of Norman date. The north chancel was once used as a village school.

Various tablets hang on the walls of the church—to the memory of Baron de Montesquien, of Bridge, died 1824; Martha Baldock, of Bridge, and buried at Elham, died 1826; Lieutenant-Colonel E. J. Pratt, 9th Lancers, died on his passage home from India in 1857; Amelius Sicard, M.R.C.S., of Bridge, died 1880; and John Lansberry, died 1849; Beby Fitch, wife of Thomas Fitch, died 1807. Another inscription is as follows:—

“This tablet is erected by the Guardians of the Bridge Union as a mark of their respect and esteem for the memory of the late Mr. William Forth who from the formation of the Union, a period of 30 years, performed the duties of Relieving Officer, Master, and finally Clerk. A zealous, upright officer and kind friend to the poor. He died, regretted by all who knew him, on the 18th day of April, 1865, in the 70th year of his age.”

There are also tablets relating to vaults containing the mortal remains of James Lord, of Patricbourne, and Catherine Brice.

Let us now retrace our steps down the village to the bridge, just opposite to which hangs a sign from the Plough Inn to inform us that the Fire Brigade has its headquarters within. This brigade was formed in 1873, the residents of the district purchasing the engine. At that time the Marquess Conyngham took a keen interest in fire-extinguishing apparatus, and he undertook the captaincy, the other members being Messrs. Smith, Pilcher, Verrier, Sargent, Hardiman, Hodges, Evers, Jarvis, Garland, Winter and Carpenter. In 1878 the Earl of Mount Charles, the marquess’s son, was captain, with Messrs. R. Smith and F. J. D. Sams as lieutenants. The present honorary secretary, Mr. C. Wills, has seen no less than thirty-three years’ service.

Strolling up the street we find some of the houses shaded by the branches of lime trees, and then comes the village smithy—how luxuriantly the moss grows and blooms on the tiles hereabouts!—more trees shade a house from the western sun and then we come to the oldest building in Bridge. This is one of the old frame houses of the sixteenth century, the timber beams being filled in with bricks. Additions have been made, but apparently it was once a pretentious house, though now divided into the habitation of several families. At the upper end of the street are villas—the “west end” of

Bridge. Here, too, is the Post Office, a quaint little building with the shop floor much below the level of the road.

One old relic of Bridge—the village stocks—has disappeared, no one knows where; and yet it was famous for having the following lines inscribed upon it:—

He who will not the law obey,
Here in ye stocks must surely lay.

The Public Hall stands in the centre of the village, a building that was increased to its present size in 1878, when, among other charitable actions, the Marquess Conyngham presented it to the village in celebration of the coming of age of his eldest son, the Earl of Mount Charles. It is used for entertainments and meetings, and a reading room, but when the Parish Council came into being the Marquess had an inscription placed in the interior stating that the hall was his property, and was lent to the vicar of the parish.

Taking the Patrixbourne turning at the Red Lion, one comes immediately upon the modern Wesleyan chapel, the only Nonconformist place of worship to supply the two parishes. Until 1894 Dissenters must needs trudge to Canterbury for service, but in that year the present modest building—of corrugated iron and lined inside with wood—was opened, the site having been given by Mr. Perry and the fund raised by public subscription.

Along the Patrixbourne road we find the schools well shaded by trees. The bounds of Patrixbourne parish extend to this spot and the schools of Bridge stand within them. The original buildings are adjoining the master's house, all of those in the rear being additions necessitated by increasing numbers of scholars. Many years ago the Marquess Conyngham, of Bifrons, who took great interest in parish affairs, used to educate and clothe thirty girls of the parish at his own expense, at a schoolroom adjoining the lodge entrance to Bifrons Park, the remainder of the parish children receiving their education at the original schools. That it was not of a "higher" educational character may be judged from the fact that the predecessor of Mr. and Mrs. R. Wye, who were the first Government teachers in 1871, was unable to sign her name, and used to make a cross when receiving her cheque! It is not to be understood that writing was ignored, as this mistress had an assistant who taught that very necessary rudiment of all

education. But to return to the thirty girls. These were educated and clothed at the sole expense of the Marquess. The distinctive clothing consisted of an ordinary sailor hat with blue ribbon, a blue serge dress, a scarlet cloak in winter and a white one in summer. After some years the Marquess is said to have found the girls to be somewhat of an annoyance at the park entrance, and erected an additional building at the rear of the original schools, and two further enlargements have since taken place, the children of the combined parishes now being educated there. It is stated, however, that until as late as 1885 the girls wore the distinctive dress provided by the Marquess, but latterly the parents failed to appreciate what must have been given at considerable cost, and the benefactor, not desiring to bestow upon the parishioners at his own expense that which was not accepted with favour, put an end to the custom. When the schools were taken over by the Government he paid £50 a year towards the upkeep.

Not far from the schools stand the gas works that supply a wide district, 1859 being the date of their erection. Opposite run the green swards of Bifrons Park and by the roadside runs the Nailbourne that is bridged in a remarkable way by two fallen trees. Probably when the water once flowed along this river bed with exceptional violence the roots of the trees were undermined and the huge trunks fell. The woodman's axe spared them, even in their helpless position, but fresh branches have shot out through the bark and grown to a considerable height. And amid their branches one can clamber across the stream over the two natural bridges.

On the other side of the village stands Bridge Union Workhouse, charmingly situated on the slope of the hill overlooking the village and the valley, with the beautiful scenery of Bourne Park beyond. The red bricks give an appearance of cheerfulness, while the garden plots each side of the entrance are generally a blaze of flowers. The House, as the date shows on the building, was erected in 1835, and, the population in the parishes covered by the Union having shown little or no increase since that time, it has been subject to very little alteration. A number of East Kent workhouses are built on the quadrangle system, a favourite design of Sir Francis Head, a Commissioner in the early days of Poor Law Administration, and Bridge Workhouse is on this style, having its quadrangle, with entrance gate and offices on either side in front, a narrow two-storeyed building running round three sides, with the

chapel, cook-house, porter's lodge and exercise yard in the centre. It covers in all an area of four acres, with three acres of garden ground. It is interesting to recall the fact that the first meeting of the Bridge Board of Guardians was held on April 22nd, 1835, at the White Horse Inn, Bridge, the Workhouse not then being in existence. Before the formation of the Unions each parish, or many of them, dealt with their own poor, and the indoor poor were distributed in various old poor-houses at Ickham, Wickham, Waltham and other places. At this meeting the chair was taken by Sir Francis Head, the Poor Law Commissioner, who came down imbued with his official importance, and with sanguine hopes and confidence as to the wonderful effects likely to be wrought in elevating the working classes of the country. It would appear that he took the chair *ex-officio*, and made a lengthy address, which is copied verbatim in the minute book, and the following were the concluding words of his peroration: "I will now no longer trespass on your valuable time, but will conclude by expressing an earnest desire that the business of this day may be commenced, and that your future meetings may be conducted with that friendly, amicable feeling and that careful government of temper, which should distinguish the proceedings of all bodies of highly respectable men for the welfare of society, for the first time having met this day in Union." It was proposed by Mr. Lake, seconded by Mr. Denne Denne, that Mr. Richard Peckham should be chairman, and it may prove of interest to record the names of those who have succeeded him in that capacity: Mr. C. W. Dowsett, 1836; Mr. R. Lake, 1837; Mr. Charles Collard, 1838-1841; Mr. Henry Collard, 1841-1846; Mr. Charles Collard, 1846-1864; Captain Thomas Hilton, 1864-1870; Mr. David Collard, 1870-1877; Mr. W. Sims, 1877-1883; Mr. T. Louis Collard, 1883-1894; Mr. J. D. Maxted, C.C., 1894-1909. The first clerk was Mr. Herbert Collard, who held office until 1840; followed by Mr. W. Forth, 1840 to 1865; Mr. Allen Fielding, 1865 to 1895; and Mr. T. L. Collard from that time until the present. It is somewhat a unique record that Mr. T. L. Collard should have been eleven years chairman, followed by fourteen years' service as clerk to the same board. The first master (Mr. John Weeks) was known as the "Governor," and his wife as "Governess," at a joint salary of £80, but, whether it was due to himself or whether the Guardians failed to carry out the injunctions of Sir Francis Head as to the friendly, amicable feeling and careful government of temper, he did not find the office a bed of roses and resigned before the end of the year.

Opposite the Workhouse racing stables were once kept by the late Mr. Howard, father of the recently deceased veterinary surgeon of that name. He regularly ran horses, more especially when races were held on Barham Downs, but the latter event finally collapsed owing to the dwindling of subscriptions, and the Easter Plate, run on Tuesday, is now unknown. But in bygone days this Plate was the envy of all owners in East Kent, and the keenest competition took place on the great day. A letter by a resident of Bridge, unfortunately undated, says:—"Bridge ought to have won the Plate with Black Girl, but we made money though even she did lose, and the old Squire made us full of beer. We drank his health and Black Girl's health till not one drop was left in the barrels on the lawn. Jabez lost his purse, but not money. His money went up Barham way. A betting man out of London must have had his beaver and his pockets, which he carries outside his coat, overfull of Bridge money when he reached London, for we lost all our bets. He went home Faversham road." Is this suggestive that if he had travelled via Bridge the beaver hat and outside pockets might have been lighter ere he reached London?

The old parish records contain many quaint and amusing items. In 1815 we find "Paid for prayer of thanksgiving for the battle of Waterloo, 1s." Later we see similar prayers paid for, but at varying prices, 1/3 and 1/2. Whether the prayers were paid for by length or by the amount of gratitude exhibited by the clergyman entrusted with the sacred task is not stated, but otherwise it is difficult to understand the varying charges.

The church plate at Bridge was all made in 1850 and presented by Mrs. Gregory, who generously restored the church in 1859. It consists of a cup, paten, flagon and two alms-plates, each bearing the monogram I.H.S. and the words, "For the Love of God."

There are two charities, dated April 13th, 1867, connected with Bridge, left by Mrs. Gregory, who formerly lived at Bridge Hill. The first is known as the educational charity of Mary Gregory, for the support of infants' and boys' school, and bringing in a nett annual income of £29/11/6, which amount has not been affected by the new Education Acts, as has been the case in some parishes. The second is known as the eleemosynary charity of Mary Gregory, and is of the annual value of £14/15/8, devoted to aged widows and deserving poor. The former each receive 7/6 at Christmas, and the latter two to four hundredweight of coal, according to circumstances of the participants.

All around Bridge are rich pastures and wood-land, with private parks, and from the hills pretty glimpses of truly rural Kent can be obtained. Years ago the village itself was unhealthy through the moisture occasioned by the stream, and Hasted further tells us that the hills were chalk and very barren and stone-clad. The chalk is still there, but the land looks far from barren, and trees appear to grow luxuriously, especially in the parks. Bridge Hill House stands in a delightful situation, its grounds sloping down towards the village. The residence is modern and belongs to Mr. Ralph Peto, but the Baroness Zborowski at present lives there.

Not far from the village street and standing within the limits of Bourne Park are the remains of what was once a very imposing mansion, built by a famous Dover merchant. I refer to Bridge Place, and the merchant was one Sir Arnold Braems. But let us dive back further into ancient history, when the manor of Bridge or Blackenansbury was in the possession of the Abbey of St. Augustine. It was the property of the monks until Henry the Eighth suppressed the Abbey and took unto himself their land, including the Manor of Bridge. But in the thirty-sixth year of his reign he granted it to Henry Lawrence to hold by Knight's service, and by this new owner a court was regularly held, the court lodge standing on the very spot now occupied by Bridge Place. Passing through several hands the land came into the possession of Sir Arnold Braems, who pulled down the court lodge and erected a magnificent mansion on the site.

This old Knight had a remarkable history, reminding one of the worthy known as Customer Smyth, who is buried in Ashford church and gained his nickname by farming the customs of Kentish ports until Queen Elizabeth emptied his pockets and reduced his profits. Arnold Braems came of Flemish stock, his father being a Dover merchant in the time of Charles the First. When his monarch quarrelled with Parliament young Braems took the Royalist side, and held the rank of major in the East Kent force of stalwarts, who, under Mr. Hammond, of Nonington, hoped to wrest Dover Castle from the Roundheads. But they failed and Major Braems found it necessary to secrete himself. The Restoration, however, found him again in evidence, and within a fortnight he was elected Member of Parliament for Dover and received the honour of Knighthood at the hands of his grateful sovereign Charles the Second. But he remained at the House of Commons only a very short time, pre-

ferring a commercial life and using all his energy in developing Dover as a port. He acquired land all along the sea front, erecting huge buildings, and by thus monopolising the landing and warehousing of goods, and farming the harbour tolls and customs, made a huge fortune. Then occurred one of those strange incidents that so frequently mar a man's career. Up to this point he had been shrewd beyond measure, and yet he was unwise enough to build an enormous mansion at Bridge and expend so much wealth upon its construction and his household expenditure, that his fortune was exhausted to such an extent that he was financially crippled to the day of his death at the age of eighty. But maybe it was love of ostentation rather than an error of judgment that caused his loss; and this seems probable when we find that he was buried "in linen," a matter of extravagance for which a heavy fine was imposed for the benefit of the poor of the parish. In previous articles I have explained that law compelled everyone to be "buried in woollen" for the benefit of the home industry, and any infringement of this rule compelled the estate of the dead man to pay a heavy fine.

Bridge Place came into the possession of Walter Braems, the old merchant knight's son, but his widow sold it to Mr. John Taylor, of Bifrons, who pulled down the greater portion of it, as he found it too large for the average country gentleman to keep up. The place remained in possession of the Taylor family until it was purchased by the Marquess Conyngham, and became part of the Bifrons estate, and the present tenant is Mr. William Howard. The remaining part of the building was apparently one wing, and the wall upon which the stables are built marks the front of the old building, the foundations of which are still to be traced underground. The mansion was, judging from what is left of it, a comfortable place, the lower rooms having a good pitch, and all the apartments are well lighted. Bridge Place is now wreathed in ivy and approached by a drive commencing close by the church.

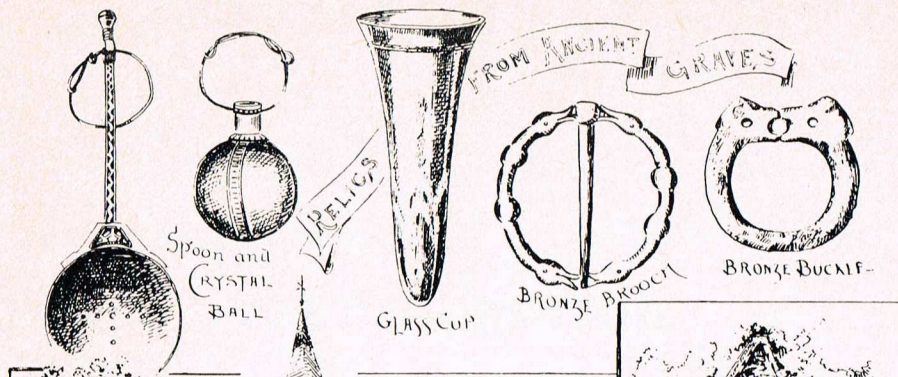
Although of no historical interest, Little Bridge Place, the residence of Mr. Louis Collard, standing close by Bridge Place, is picturesque and delightfully situated among a wealth of trees and shrubs. At one time it contained some rather fine mural tablets, but they mysteriously disappeared years ago.

Gorsley Wood stands partly in Bridge and partly in Bishopsbourne parish and here in the year 1882 three ancient tumuli were discovered, each containing a kistvaen or stone chest. The mounds

were close together and of various dimensions. The chests found in the first two were four feet long, while the third was only three feet in length. Cremation was undoubtedly in vogue amongst the British at the time of the Roman invasion and experts tell us that the charred ashes found inside these old chests were all that remained of the bodies of the dead. The largest mound was first opened and the workmen had not dug far before they came to a pavement of tiles roughly made and badly burnt. Next came to light a human skull, probably that of a young person, and those who took part in the disinterment were struck with the curious change that overcame the skull when it was exposed to the air when first unearthed. The veinous lines in the interior of the skull were clearly defined and of a bright colour, but in a few seconds their red appearance vanished and they could with difficulty be traced. It seems strange and marvellous that after all these centuries any sign of the veins should have remained in the skull. The large stone chest was then disclosed to view, the top stone of which was so heavy that it had to be removed by the help of pulleys attached to a tree. When the top was moved all that was found within was some charred wood, but there is but little doubt that the ashes of a cremated body had been placed within at the time of burial. Under the second mound was found a stone chest of the same dimensions as the first, but the third and smaller one contained a large quantity of bones broken into fragments, some having apparently been burnt. Under these remains were several large flint stones and it is supposed that on them the body had been placed before undergoing cremation. At the time of the discovery antiquarians discussed the matter with great keenness, some thinking that the three tumuli, being placed close together, were intended to imply a Triune God. Others believe that the one which contained the skull had been used as an altar before being covered in with earth and yet others think that they were simply the burial places of old British chieftains who lived seventeen or eighteen hundred years ago. There is nothing now in Gorsley Wood to indicate the spot where the remains lay.



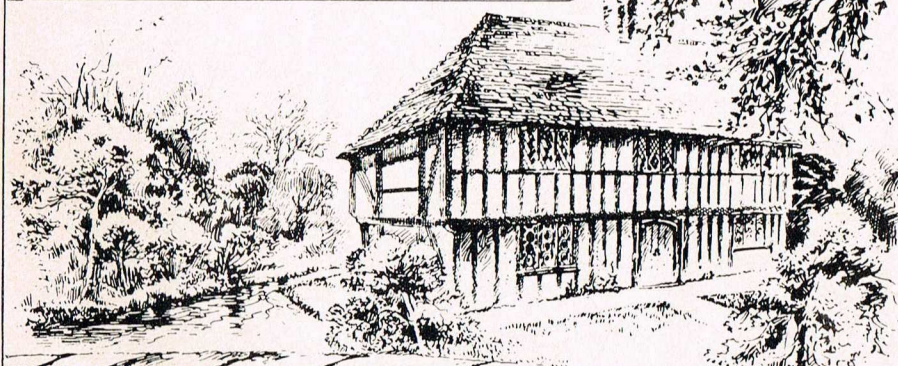
There were many more shops in Bridge fifty years ago as this picture of a group of ladies outside the Reading Room reveals.



Patrybourne Church



The South Doorway of the Church



A PICTURESQUE DWELLING.

PATRIXBOURNE.

JUST as it stands off the main tracks of the country, in a bye-way between Littlebourne, on the Canterbury and Sandwich road, and Bridge, on the Canterbury and Dover road, so the little village of Patribourne is a place by itself—silent, beautiful, rural. There is an atmosphere of antiquity about it, although there are no tumble-down dwellings, mean thatched cottages or signs of poverty. Quite the reverse—you feel that the inhabitants are well fed, well clothed and certainly well housed. For the buildings are substantial, if old, and were erected when good Kentish timber was solid and seasoned when used, and when the mason and the bricklayer took pride in their work.

In this cosy spot the artist could fill many pages of his sketch book and up in the churchyard the poet could revel in his dreams—rather melancholy ones perhaps, for the host of pyramidal yews look sombre under the shade of the taller trees around them. There is foliage everywhere, save in one gap where one of the two fine sentinel trees that guarded the churchyard gate has fallen off at the trunk and his fellow is hanging dangerously over the road, for his life's span is nearly finished. The church itself appeals to our emotions and calls forth our admiration too. Its ancient quaint tower with entrance beneath, its perfect specimen of the Norman stonemason's work and its Decorated windows all recall us to the fact that some seven hundred years have passed since it was built. And everything is so still and peaceful on this little bit of God's acre; the song of birds alone disturb the silence.

And the village itself—that, too, is charmingly free from turmoil. It is a place where you might sleep—and dream when awake. No public-house, with the exception of a general shop where beer can

be obtained but drunk only off the premises, no post office, no school with noisy youngsters—you have to trudge to Bridge, or close to Bridge, a mile or more away, for such luxuries. And yet Patribourne is the mother of Bridge, for is not the church of the latter village but an appendage of the former? And here there is a Vicarage and a parson, but none at Bridge.

Patribourne derives its name, like its neighbours—Littlebourne, Bekesbourne and Bridge—from its close proximity to the stream—the famous Nailbourne—that comes through its domains. Sometimes the bed of the river is quite dry, but as I write it is running wildly along towards the Stour and roads and gardens are flooded. It was from this river that Patribourne took its original name of Bourne, and then some great landowner named Patrick prefixed his own name to the village of his possession and it henceforth became Patribourne, or Patricksbourne, as I find it more generally used until within the past few years.

You plunge into the place from three distinct roads, but whichever way it may be you are struck by the winding roads that would make a model for the town planner of the twentieth century. And as you traverse each graceful curve picturesque houses meet your eye one after the other. Coming from Bridge you notice the beauty of the creeper-clad dwelling known as Waterfall Cottage, whose Tudor chimney stack denotes its age. Before and behind runs the swirling Nailbourne, dashing over tiny cataracts that give the house its name. Then comes a half-timbered house with projecting upper storey; the church wreathed in ivy; the Vicarage, which is another timbered house; further along an old brick-built residence with Elizabethan gable at the back and covering of timber in front. Close by the rapid stream is undermining the gnarled roots of a tall fir tree and small boys try their luck with rod and line for eels, for which the Nailbourne is famous. Some little distance beyond are cottages with corbels of weird figures, male and female, half human, half beast, some struggling in awful agony, others grinning in ecstasies of delight. Those buildings and their ornamentations are quite modern, having been erected from drawings of the Marchioness of Conyngham. Near by are oasthouses, but alas! useless today. Flanking one side of the village is Bifrons Park, and it is remarkable that the land on the opposite side of the street is in Bekesbourne parish, while to show the peculiar division of parishes in this part of Kent, we find that the so-called Bridge elementary

schools are built on land in Patribourne. All this is confusing, but not so remarkable as many would imagine, for the neighbouring parishes of Littlebourne and Ickham overlap in a similar way.

The church of St. Mary is mentioned in Domesday in 1086, when Patribourne was chiefly owned by the famous Odo, Bishop of Bayeux. Here is the quaint extract:—"There is a church and one servant and four mills of sixteen and eight. A fishery of sixpence. Pasture of which the foreign tenants have ploughed six acres of land. Wood for the panage of four hogs." In 1258 the church of Patribourne and the chapel of Bridge were given to the Priory of Merton in Surrey, on condition that three canons should reside in the place, and there appears but little doubt that they carried out this injunction. But previously the church was re-built, as the fine specimens of Norman architecture are of the twelfth century.

The first thing you notice when approaching St. Mary's is its compact appearance, obtained through the remarkable position of the porch—underneath the tower. The nave, tower and chancel are all original Norman work, but the north aisle was built when the church was thoroughly restored in 1824 and the Norman doorway and Decorated window on that side were taken from the old wall and built into the new. The greatest treasures of the church are its Norman doorways. There is a small one on the south side of the chancel, with its mouldings somewhat battered, while a small stone figure is in the same condition. This figure apparently has a crown upon its head and the hands are uplifted, but what it represents cannot accurately be decided. This doorway sinks into insignificance in comparison with the magnificent richly-moulded doorway through which we enter the church on the south side. This doorway—one of the best of its sort in Kent—is cut under the tower. It forcibly reminds one of Barfrestone, although not quite so elaborate. The mouldings are deeply carved, but the principal embellishments are reserved for the tympanum, the subjects being "Our Lord and Majesty attended by angels," while below are carvings to represent foliage and strange birds. The head of the arch contains much ornamentation, including dog-tooth work, and this is surmounted by a tall pointed canopy, with a niche carved with the Agnus Dei. This work dates back as late as 1170.

Entering the church under the tower the outlook is impressive—everything seems much more massive than one is accustomed to find in a village church. There are three pointed arches, one in front

and one on either side, each cut out of the huge square supports of the tower. With the exception of the modern north aisle the roofs are open and timbered; a modern arcade divides the aisle from the nave along the spot where the old Norman wall used to stand. The chancel is approached under an arch which is probably of even earlier date than the south doorway, while the priest's door just inside the chancel is equally ancient. This doorway is surmounted by a statue of the patron saint of the church, St. Mary. There are two aumbries in the chancel as well as the thirteenth century canopied piscina, while in one of the corners is a squint through which the occupants of the private chapel could see the altar; but this hagioscope is now blocked up.

There are several interesting Norman windows, including seven in the chancel. Those on the north and south walls are small without any moulding and contain glass given by the Marchioness Conyngham, in 1849. Over the altar are triplets, the central one being surmounted by a marigold window of eight lights radiating from a central circle. For many years these windows were sealed up, but when the church was restored in 1849 they were opened up and filled by the Marchioness Conyngham with ancient Flemish glass. One of these chancel windows with the Crucifixion as its subject is dated 1532, while the glass containing a figure of Samson with the jawbone of an ass bears the date of 1538. Another window depicting Christ in the garden of Gethsemane is dated 1589, while another has 1602 marked upon it.

The south chapel contains the family pews of the owners of Bifrons, and is known as the Bifrons chapel. It is seldom that an open fireplace is seen in a church but, let into the wall, is an ordinary household stove that throws out its warmth to the worshippers in cold weather. In the window is some more Flemish glass with dates extending from 1550 to 1670. Here are several monuments in memory of various owners of Bifrons, including John Bargrave, who built the mansion and lies with his wife beneath the floor of the south chapel. The Latin inscription on the stone is interesting as being the composition of the Rev. John Bargrave, son of the builder of Bifrons, and rector of Harbledown and Pluckley in the 17th century, while he was also a Prebendary of Canterbury. He died in 1680. Amongst other tablets is one to John Taylor, who purchased Bifrons in 1694 and died in 1729. The inscription states that he "Raised a beautiful garden to Bifrons, gave several

ornaments of value to the church, was a strict economist, a just dealer and a friend to the poor." It further states that his eldest son, Brook, died in London in 1731, and was endowed with "many valuable qualities, both natural and acquired." Dr. Brook Taylor was an author and married Elizabeth Sawbridge, of Olantigh, Wye. Another tablet commemorates Captain Bridges Watkinson Taylor, who served in the Royal Navy and was accidentally drowned by the upsetting of his boat off Brindisi in 1814. He fought in the battle of the Nile and later on, when lieutenant on board the *Leander* of fifty guns, was wounded and taken prisoner during a hard contested action between that ship and the French ship *Génévent* of seventy-four guns. Other monuments in the church are to the memory of John and Elizabeth Denne, of Patricksbourne Court Lodge, who died in 1690 and 1680 respectively; also Daniel, a son of the above, who died in 1702, and from whom the Dennes, of Lydd, are descended. There are tablets to the memory of the Rev. Charles Hughes-Hallett and his family; he was formerly vicar of the parish, but died at Higham. The monuments to the memory of the Conyngham family include those of Henry, the first Marquess Conyngham and his wife Elizabeth, the former dying in 1832 and the latter in 1861; Francis Nathaniel, second Marquess, who occupied several public offices during the reigns of King William IV. and Queen Victoria, and died in 1876; Jane, wife of the above, who died in 1876, three weeks before her husband; Lord Francis Nathaniel Conyngham, R.N., and M.P. for Co. Clare, who died in 1881 at the age of forty-eight, and also two sisters of the second Marquess, namely, Elizabeth Henrietta, married to the Earl of Aboyne, dying in 1839, and Harriet Maria, married to Sir William Somerville, dying in 1843.

Bifrons Park lies in the heart of the village and many of the towering trees that shade the churchyard are part of its timbers. The house itself is white and plain in style. Originally built by Sir John Bargrave, member of a Bridge family, in the sixteenth century, it was practically rebuilt at the close of the eighteenth century by the Rev. Edward Taylor, and on the front he placed the following motto in honour of his wife:—"Diruta ædificat uxor bona, ædificata diruit mala." This motto can still be seen. From the Taylors it came into the possession of the Marquess Conyngham.

The whole of the valley watered by the lesser Stour is rich in old Saxon cemeteries, and it is computed that this special district

was more thickly inhabited than any part of Kent in early days. In 1866 a few graves were discovered near the keeper's lodge opposite Patribourne church, but on Patribourne Hill a great many were unearthed in the year 1866. Strangely enough the ground was perfectly smooth and it was only while the workmen of Marquess Conyngham were digging for a new plantation in that part of Bifrons Park that they came upon evidence of the graves. Under the supervision of antiquarians the excavations were carried out and various skeletons discovered, and it is remarkable that most of the men had been over six feet in height. The majority of the bodies were buried nearly north and south, but a few lay east and west, and it is assumed that the latter may have been early Christians, amongst whom a certain position of a dead body was studied just as it is at the present day. Within the graves were discovered a great number of relics, the most frequent being hammer-shaped brooches, a crystal ball and a perforated spoon. One remarkable feature was that the crystal ball and perforated spoon were found close together between the thigh bones of the female skeleton, and it is argued by many that the supposed magical properties of the crystal ball were believed in by the pagans of old. Mr. T. G. Godfrey Faussett, the eminent antiquarian, took a great interest in the excavations, and has given us descriptions of other relics found within the graves. They include, besides what I have already mentioned, a drinking cup of delicate green colour, knives, iron buckles, iron awls, iron shears, keys, pins, ear rings, beads, bracelets, studs, and a great variety of personal ornaments.

One opens the graves of the dead with awe and a feeling akin to remorse. Centuries may have elapsed since those same bodies were consigned to their Mother Earth, and yet time cannot erase the fact that the disinterment savours of sacrilege, and probably the discoverers of this old Saxon cemetery found it rather a gruesome sight as the secrets of the earth were disclosed one by one. We read how in one grave the body of a little deformed child was found; in another where a man who had once had his legs cut off was lying side by side with a stalwart fellow of over six feet perfect in limb; then again the body of a woman lay in a long grave with a space at her head in which the body of a baby had once been buried, but while the latter had fallen to dust the bones of the mother stood the ravages of time. The graves of children were numerous, and in almost every case a string of beads had been placed around

the neck, while similar ornaments were sometimes found with the women, and by the side of most of the men lay a sword.

It was probably the existence of the ancient cemeteries at Patribourne that gave rise to an old tradition of this village that on a certain night of the year a procession of skeletons could be seen slowly wending their silent way around the church. They entered from the gate by the roadside, led by a cowled monk, walked around the building and then disappeared. This story I found in an old manuscript written over a hundred years ago. Possibly human skeletons and bones had been discovered by the inhabitants, and it would be easy in days gone by for the rustic mind to conjure up a ghost story on the strength of so gruesome a discovery. No one in Patribourne at the present time knows anything of the skeletons' church parade. It has gone the way of most ghost stories—choked by the matter-of-fact atmosphere of the present day.

