

# Notes on the village



## of Bridge

**By Mrs. J. Friend**



Published by the Bridge By-pass Bonanza Committee  
on the occasion of the opening of the Bridge By-pass  
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Above: The picture of Bridge we are happy to lose; heavy traffic passing in the High Street in 1972. Picture courtesy of the Sunday Times.  
Front cover: The High Street photographed in 1972.

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The old Merryweather hand pump being tested out in case of fire.

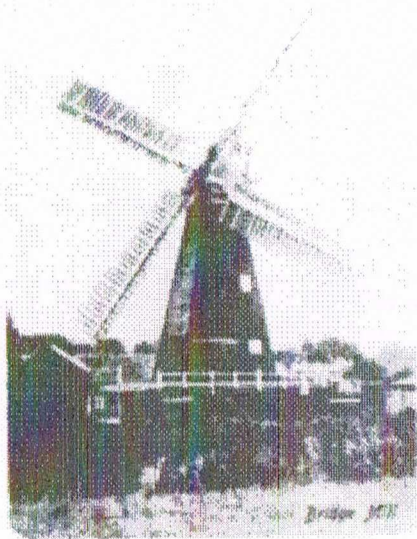
These Notes are taken from a description of Bridge written by the late Mrs. Friend of the Red Lion Public House in 1958. Mrs. Friend lived in the village all her life, and remembered the village in the days before the arrival of the motor car.

The notes are now in the possession of Mr. John Williamson and form part of the village history book. Mrs. Friend was one of the early members of the Bridge Womens Institute, and her husband managed many of the sporting activities and was also a member of the Bridge Fire Brigade.

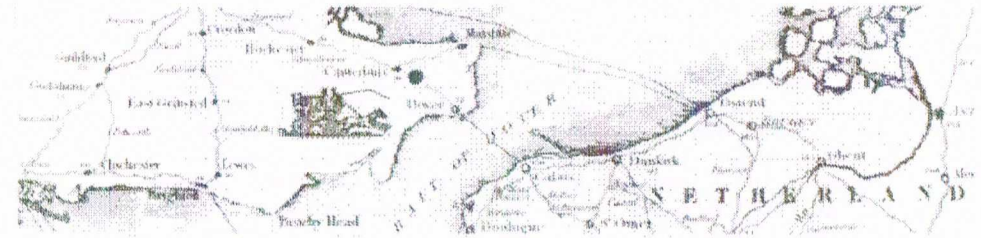
J. J. Williamson  
1976

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Bridge Mill overlooked the village from the north. The site is now Corraill's fuel depot.



### PATRIXBOURNE cum BRIDGE

These are a few items of interest around my villages of Patricbourne cum Bridge, and District near by. Some are taken from Old Books and Directories; also from memories of aged inhabitants told to my late husband and myself during my 60 years residence here.

As we all know, the Romans landed at Walmer. There, a notice board is erected to mark the spot of landing. They came to land that was very rough and rugged, towards Adisham Downs on to Barham Downs, and arrived to fight the last battle at a sunken spot. Bourne Park side of Bridge Hill, which is still called "England's Hole." The Romans remained on this high ground. We must remember there was no Dover Road then. They made an amphitheatre, and performed feats of skill and daring to impress the poor old Britons. Lower down the hill there is a spring of water, in a field still called "Roman's field", and here the Romans used to bathe. This spring flows into the made lake in front of Bourne House. No mansions were there then, only a few humble dwellings by the ford at Bregge, now Bridge.

It will be noticed that the Romans came over the Downs after leaving Dover, with their famous road making, and Bridge is the second village on the road. Some years later local gentry paid for a bridge to cross over the river to make it easier for their transport. The good firm roads in East Kent are made from solid foundations of the Kent flint stones, of which our Churches are built. When I was a small child I often stopped on my way to school to watch an old man seated on a cart of stones with a small rake in his left hand and a hammer in his right hand, breaking these stones to use for road making. These stones had previously been picked up from the fields by women, employed by the farmers, who later sold them to the road contractors. How many farmers would bother about the stones on their fields to day? There is a special way to measure these cants of stones, which is now a thing of the past with our tarred Macadam and concrete roads. Such is progress!

We have signs of Saxon occupation, for on the top of Side Hill nearing the present keeper's cottage a Saxon Burial Ground was found. The relics found are good examples of the times and are called the "Bifrons Collection" and are in Maidstone Museum.

There is a very large wood called Gosley Wood in the Parish of Bridge which once belonged to St. Augustine's Monastery afterwards granted to Sir Thomas Colepepper. About 1898-99 I well remember a Mr. Pilcher who lived in a cottage in Bourne Park. He was a great Archaeologist and had heard from the woodmen that some stone slabs were together in the wood. He inspected them and found them to be Tumuli, and then got



permission to open them. The stones that covered them were brought from miles away as they are not of Kent

stone. It was fenced off and it is now possible to see the place. The road leading to the Tumuli is now called Kingsley Lane and bears off to Gosley Wood by Flint Cottages. My husband and I were talking to some woodmen about these, and they then told us of the marks of the foundations of a large mansion in Gosley Woods towards the Kingston end. One can recognise this Park Farm with its beautifully made well and Wood Gate and Park Gate, which must certainly refer to the Park round this mansion.

Now a few reminiscences of the Dover Road. The famous Mile Stones could certainly tell us a lot if they could only talk. They had remained, (for all we know), just where they had been first erected, until 1940, when they were all taken up owing to the scare of invasion. These were replaced after the war, but I, for one, feel very cross that the Roman Numerals were not kept intact, as they were, cut into the stones. Our new generation have painted on our everyday numerals. They could at least have kept us this bit of history to show our many overseas visitors who pass along this road.

I will now give my memories of transport for 60 years, from 1896. Then, our connections with Canterbury were to walk or ride. We rode on solid tyre cycles, sometimes a penny farthing bicycle, tricycles, pony carts, or horse back. Best of all was the Coach, with its four in hand and Post Horn. This came from Folkestone to



Coaching gave way to the Canterbury South Railway, and then buses and charabancs operated by the East Kent Road Car Co.

Canterbury daily and was driven by Mr. Scott, passing through the village between 12 and 1 o'clock, and returning between 3.30 and 4 o'clock. About 1900 a great tragedy happened to the Coach going round the bend at the Red House, Barham, (since by-passed). The Coach went over, and Mr. Scott was killed.

The Pilgrim's passed from the Dover Road by Gipsy Cottage, Cold Harbour Farm, Shepherds Close, Keeper's Cottage, through Patixbourne, Hode or Hoad Lane as it used to be spelt, to Little Barton, and Spring Lane to the Cathedral. One can see how these names explained to the Pilgrims just what to find and where to rest. At Gipsy Cottage I expect gipsies were to be found. At Cold Harbour, it was very cold to rest. Shepherds Close, something warmer. Patixbourne, with its Old Church, somewhere to

rest and find comfort. Spring Lane, somewhere near by a spring to water the horses.

Along this road marched soldiers to be camped on the Downs during the scares of Napoleon; World War I and World War II. Each war had better equipped soldiers, but all to protect their country as their forefathers had done at "England's Hole". On this road in 1914, a road of thick chalky dust, not yet tarred, came a hundred or two of London Buses to be conveyed to France to transport our troops over there. Well after the first dozen passed by, the dust became a nuisance. The drivers were only used to clean London streets. The dust made them cough and sneeze, and they really thought that the Germans had put something on the road. Even the newspapers mentioned it.

We also had the Carrier's van . . . the Carrier used to get your town shopping for you. He never forgot any order and his charge was td. small, and 2d. large, per parcel. Later we had motor cars, very early vintage, to the most up to date makes, still travelling along this wonderful road. Motor buses also, from the large open bus with high backed seats like theatre seats. When it rained the driver pulled to the side of the road and adjusted a large hood over the passengers. Just think of our lovely luxury coaches going along this same road over which Roman Chariots travelled 2000 years ago!



Bridge's old Volunteer Fire Brigade proudly poses for a picture in the days when a motor vehicle was a rare sight in the village streets. From left in the post cap is Mr. Herbert Price, who still lives in the village.

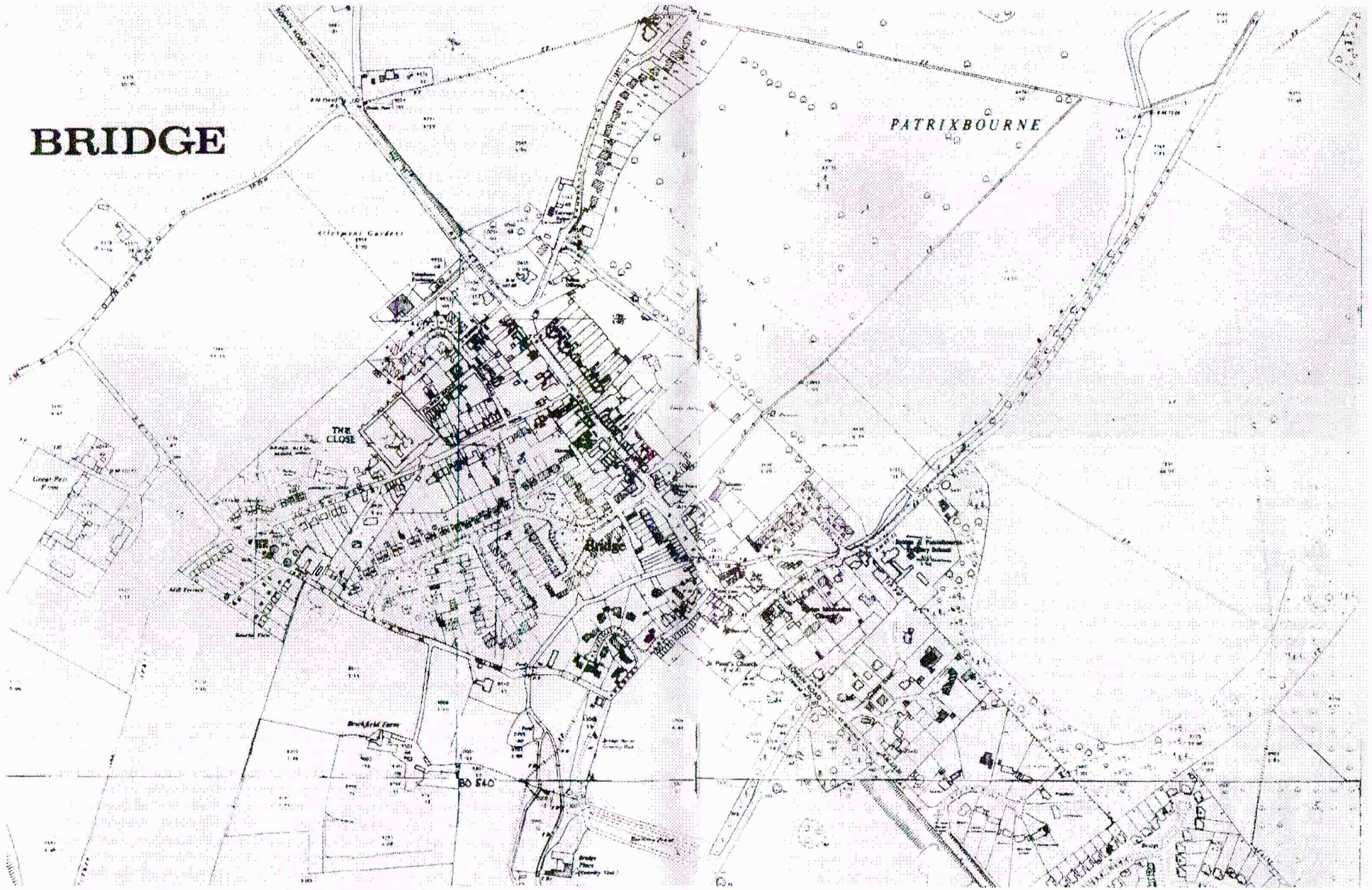
The Kentish Gazette has chronicled Bridge down the years. This photograph and caption were published in a special feature in the mid 1930's.

Enough about the Dover Road. One has only to look above, and see the many sorts of aeroplanes to wonder at the advancement of transportation. In 1887 a wonderful means of transport came to the village. A Railway was made to link up Canterbury and Folkestone. Passing through the lovely Elham Valley, it was wonderful to see the country beyond, to Folkestone, and it was a link with London with day excursions coasting 5/- return. Many times I went that way to see the sights of London, until motor buses came past our doors, and deposited us in London. But alas, this Railway only lasted until 1945. Its last gallant use was to carry the invasion guns, using the track during the war.

In the lovely St. Mary's and St. Peter's Churches we see Saxon building. The doorway of St. Mary's Church is circular, ornamented with



# BRIDGE







*Bridge Church, Kent*

Print published in 1818 in London.

carved work, and emblematical figures of Saxon architecture, and in St. Peter's Church on the south side of the chancel is a circular arched doorway with Saxon ornaments.

Records in old books tell us that, "the ancient Manor of Blackmansberry extended over the greater part of Bridge. It was originally part of the possession of the Abbey of "St. Augustine's, until the suppression of the Abbey by King Henry VIII, in the 38th year of his reign. Sir Arnold Braems, descended from a family out of Flanders, came into possession of the Manor in 1638. On the sight of ancient Court Lodge, a spacious and magnificent mansion was built and named Bridge Place. The cost of this mansion so impoverished the estate that the heirs of Sir Arnold were obliged to part with it in 1704 to Mr. John Taylor of Bifrons who pulled down the greater part of it leaving only one wing standing." It is still called Bridge Place. I remember when General and Lady Bing resided there, there was a great occasion when the Duchess of Albany, daughter of Queen Victoria, stayed there after opening some official events in Canterbury. . In 1954 the Hon. Mrs. Neame purchased the Bridge Place Mansion.

Over that part of Bridge, on the North side of Dover Road, is the manor called "Bifrons", Going back to Tudor days, the original builder was Sir John Bargrave, an important person of the 16th century. His son was John Rector of Harbledown. A Rev. Edward Taylor, son of the said John Taylor above, rebuilt Bifrons as a Georgian mansion, using some of the materials from Bridge Place. Since it was demolished in 1949, who knows, perhaps another Bifrons will be

built of some future architecture? The Rev. Edward Taylor sold Bifrons to the Marquis of Conyngham, who died in 1832. His widow, the Marchioness, continued to live there until her death. The Manor is still owned by her heirs. The Marchioness was a famous beauty of George IV's Court. When she had previously resided at Charlton Park, Bishopsbourne, and the King visited her there, a large saloon was added to the mansion for the entertainment of his Court. This place is now one of Dr. Barnardo's Homes. During her lifetime she was very generous to the villages of Patricbourne and Bridge. She opened a school for girls at the Lower Lodge Gate. These girls were very proud of their special clothes resembling that of Little Red Riding Hood. Then she supported the Free schools of Patricbourne and Bridge, helped towards the formation of a Volunteer Fire Brigade, and had a small Gas Works erected to supply the mansion and villages - a wonderful thing in her generation. She gave a large Reading Room and Library to Bridge Parish, and in 1847 a small organ for Patricbourne Church. (Later another organ was given by Mrs. Spencer Mount in memory of her husband). After her death the mansion was let to Sir Hohn Miller, Mr. Marshall, Mr. Frank Penn, Col. Hon. Milo Talbot, and then demolished.

Another of the Manors is "Bereacre" afterwards called Great and Little Bakers, and is now called Great and Little Pett Farms. When looking at Pett Farms now, one must remember that there was no railway embankment then, and it must have been very bleak. Another manor, very ancient, is "Higham", formerly owned by the Higham family, and later the Hughes Hallett family, who sold it to Mr. Gay, who in turn sold to Countess Zborowski, who died before the great alterations were made. Her son Count Zborowski inherited it and he was killed, motor racing abroad. Mr. Walter Whigham then bought it and renamed it "Highland Court". On his death the Hospital Committee bought it for an Annexe to Canterbury Hospital. Another Manor was "Renville" which was formerly owned by the Crippen family. In 1896 Mr. J. Packham owned and farmed it. On his death Mr. Miller rented it from the Conynghams. Later Mr. Crawford rented it, and in 1954 it was sold to Mr. Jim Mount.

As the land was mostly agricultural there was always outdoor employment for the women and children from early spring to late autumn. They did not earn much money, but were a jolly company, with their hop-tying, stone picking, cherying, hay-making, pea and bean harvesting, gleaning, plum picking, hop picking, and mangold pulling. Not the up to date machines of today! There is a hop garden called Flint Garden. It has been growing hops since the days of Queen Elizabeth I without a break. If one looks at the Binman's knife now, one will see it is the same as weapons used in her time. I doubt if the farmers know the age of their Binnens tools which are used year after year. Again transportation plays a great part in hop picking. Gone are the days of fetching pickers in farmwagons, or traction engines with three trucks. These brought pickers from Dover, "what a ride!" Now there are motor buses to fetch and carry the pickers.

The modern outdoor employment for women is fruit picking. The good agricultural ground all round our village is planted up with strawberries, currants, raspberries, pears and apples, (early and late). It is a beautiful sight when all the blossoms are out, although the trees are pruned and sprayed with many washes, the farmers still revert to numerous hives of bees to pollinate them. These hives are hired from an apiary until the blossom is finished. Women when picking hops in the Bifrons Gardens were supplied with hot tea at lunch time; another kind thought of





Sports Day 1954 on Daddie Fagg's Meadow. The farm was demolished following his death and turned into the housing estate served by Western Avenue.

the Marchioness. This was carried on until the first world war.

From extracts taken from an old directory by Samuel Bagshaw, 1853, 102 years ago, we learn that

"the Church at Bridge dedicated to St. Peter is an edifice with Nave, Chancel, side Aisles and north Transept, with a spire steeple. At the south east corner there are 3 bells under a circular arch; against the north wall of the Chancel are two rows of small imagery, beautifully carved in stone, the uppermost representing God the Father with several figures on each side; the lower one contains sym-bolical figures from the Old Testament. Underneath is the figure of a man lying full length with his hands uplifted. Another monument has the figure of a skull, with a snake entering in at one eye, and a hand with one finger pointing up to it, as if it had been the cause of the person's death. The Parish Register contains many entries from 1580-1660. The living has always been esteemed as a chapel to Patribourne. There is a Wesleyan Chapel in Dering Road in the village." (This was demolished in 1951).

"The free School is supported by subscription. There is an Infant's School chiefly supported by Mrs. Gregory of Bridge Hill House. The Bridge Poor Law Union, situated 1/2 mile North of the Church comprehends 22 Parishes with a population of 10,943 souls. The Union House is a spacious brick fabric built in 1835 at a cost of £4,500, for the accommodation of 350 inmates. Additions and alterations have since been made making the total cost £5,000.

"The Board consists of 22 Guardians and 4 ex-officio Guardians.

Chairman . . . Charles Collard.

Surgeons . . . Mr. A Sicard, Mr. William Sankey, Mr. Thomas Sankey Cooper, Mr. Robert Cooper-Kersey, Mr. Frederick Harvey Sankey, Mr. Edward Long.

Relieving Officer, Mr. Charles Holman.

Clerk . . . Mr. William Forth.

Parishes included Adisham, Barham, Beakesbourne, Bishopsbourne, Bridge, Chartham, Fordwich, Harbledown, Hardres (Lower and Upper), Ickham, Kingston, Littlebourne, Nackington, Patribourne. Petham, Stodmarsh, Thanington, Waltham, Westgate Without, Wickhambreux and Womenswold.

Average weekly cost of indoor paupers for the quarter ending Michaelmas 1847 was 3/4 1/2, of which sum 3/zd. was for clothing".

My comments in 1955 are that the schools are now State owned and, are for children up to 11 years plus. Seniors can pass for entry to Grammar, Art and Technical Schools, and to the Secondary Modern School at Sturry. These children are conveyed by bus daily to the schools nowadays. The Primary School's Headmistress is Miss Seath. The Poor Law Institution is another great member of the Welfare State. It is now a people's hospital and nursing home for aged folk. The buildings are vastly improved and the residents are well looked after by a trained Matron, Miss Eborn, and trained nurses; and are given pocket money of 7/6 per week as well as good food and clothes. "The Close", as it is now called does not stipulate any parishes. Residents come from distances far and wide. I don't know the actual cost per person per week but it is far above the 3/4/~ per week of 100 years ago. Again what a lot of Surgeons then, today there is one, Dr. Mercer of Littlebourne.



An imposing funeral cortege passing The Red Lion on the way to St. Peter's Church, April 1910.

Among Bagshaw's list of Public Houses, he names only "The Red Lion", "The White Horse", and a Malt House and Brewery which is now "The Plough and Harrow". The Post Office was at the "White Horse" and the tenant, Mr. Richard Sherrard was the Postmaster. One must remember that not many villagers could read and write in those days. There was a Miller, Mr. Johnson, a Tailor, Mr. Collard; Blacksmith, Mr. Fagg; Clock Maker, Mr. Hardiman; Saddler, Mr. Martin; Schoolmast, Mr. Richards.

When I came here in 1896 the Post Office was at the Grocer's Shop, Mr. Perry; Miller, Mr. White; Tailor, Mr. Stevens; Veterinary Surgeon, Mr. Howard; Blacksmith, Mr. Gilbert; Clock Maker, Mr. Billy Hardiman; Saddler, Mr. Taylor; Schoolmaster, Mr. Wye. Now is 1955, the Post Master is Mr. Roberts and the Post Office is in his own house. No Mill or Miller, no Tailor, no Vet, no Smith, no Clock Maker, no Saddler.

More extracts from Samuel Bagshaw's Directory of 1853 tell us that "Patribourne is a small village 3 miles south east from Canterbury, in a very



healthy district with the Little Stour running through the Parish. Close to it in the valley is the Church Court Lodge and Vicarage near together. In 1841 there were 53 houses and 251 inhabitants.

The Church, dedicated to St. Mary is very ancient with Nave, Transit, south Chancel and Spire. The East windows are of beautiful stained glass; it contains many ancient memorials, sumptuous monument of white marble has been erected to the late Marquis Conyngham who died in 1832. The living is that of a vicarage with the Chapel of Bridge annexed. The Free School is supported by the Marchioness Conyngham, about 50 children attend. The living of the Church was given and appropriated to the Priory of Merton, Surrey, as early as 1258 in which state they continued until the dissolution of the Priory in the 31st year of Henry VI I's reign, when they came with the Manors into the King's hands, since which they have passed in the same tract of ownership; the Parish was chiefly owned by Odo Bishop of Baieux at the time of the Domesday Book Survey about 1080. Shortly afterwards it was divided into moities, one of which was called Manor of Patribourne Merton, and was held by Margerie Bornes Married to John De Poratis a Norman, who soon after the year 1200 gave it to his newly elected priory at Beaulieu in Normandy to which afterwards became an alien cell in which state it continued till the reign of Henry IV, when it was granted to the Priory of Augustines Cannons of Merton in Surrey, hence the name Patribourne Merton. After the suppression of Henry VIII, the Manor with the Rectory and Advowson of Vicarage "to Sir Thomas Cheney to hold to him and his heirs "Males et Capiter" as a castle of Rochester. The present holder of the Manor with the Rectory and Advowson is the Marchioness of Conyngham and also owner of Patribourne Chaney.



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The arrival of the millenium! An advertisement in the Kentish Gazette of the mid 1930's.

There are two cottages in this Parish each divided into two dwellings which were given by the Taylor family to the use of the Parish."

My remarks are that there is a cottage of this description near the small shop and beerhouse. There is a brick built in the front marked 1699. Another is a nice house built the same near the bridge and stream flowing in the garden. The cottages of Patribourne were sold about 1950 by the Conyngham family. The boundary between Patribourne and Bekesbourne is the main street, so that one side of the street is Bekesbourne and the Church side is Patribourne. We consider our villages very healthy and our inhabitants live to a great age. I knew a Mrs. Hayzen, a sweet old lady, who lived to be 100. Her hair was done with side curls. She was very interesting to talk to. She had been to Australia twice, each time going round the Cape in Wind-



Mrs. Hayzen photographed on her 100th birthday in 1926. With her in Mr. C. Willis and his two sisters, Mrs. Lonsdale and Mrs. Hayzen who married the old lady's son.

jammers. What pluck to travel so far in those comfortless days!

On the Downs of Bridge Hill was a Race Course, which must have a very good thing for Bridge. It was closed about 1874-5. I understand the Stakes have been transferred to Folkestone and Wye Races. The Downs were then made into a fine golf course, with a Golf Professional, and Groundsman, a nice Golf House and Club House. The pretty round cottage on Froggall Lane was the home of the Grounds and Club Steward. After the 1914-18 war the Club House was the Headquarters of the Bridge and District British Legion. Later the place was demolished. Now there are no Golf Links. The land was ploughed up by the Highland Estate. It was always said to common land, but who can argue, even if such things as Horse Racing and Golf Links were there. Side Hill was also common land. We always held all village treats there. I well remember school treats on Ascension Day, Jubilees, and Coronation Days of King Edward VI I, King George V, and King George VI with sports and feasts.

But it had to be another spot for Elizabeth I I's Coronation, for Side Hill was ploughed up! Are the villages losing all their rights and customs? The Village Green was between Waterloo Cottages and Brewery Lane. A well was there when I came to Bridge and was used by the cottagers. Now lodges and cottages are built there.

The inhabitants were very fortunate during the two world wars. In 1914-18, bombs were dropped by Zeppelins near Hode Farm, Patribourne. In the 1939-45 war, enemy bombers were brought down, long range shells from France fell near our Council Houses at Bridge, we were in the direct route for the "Doodle Bugs" and Rockets meant for London. We lost two cottages at Patribourne, but fortunately with no loss of life or injury to anyone. With the memory of the famous "Battle of Britain" fought over our heads, I close the items of the History of Bridge and Patribourne from B.C. 56 to A.D. 1955

Mrs. Jack Friend, 1955.