

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 Patricbourne—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 Patrixbourne, 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 matlock. 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 ROVLES 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 Patrixbourne, 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 Patricbourne 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 Patricbourne road we find the schools well shaded by trees. The bounds of Patricbourne 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