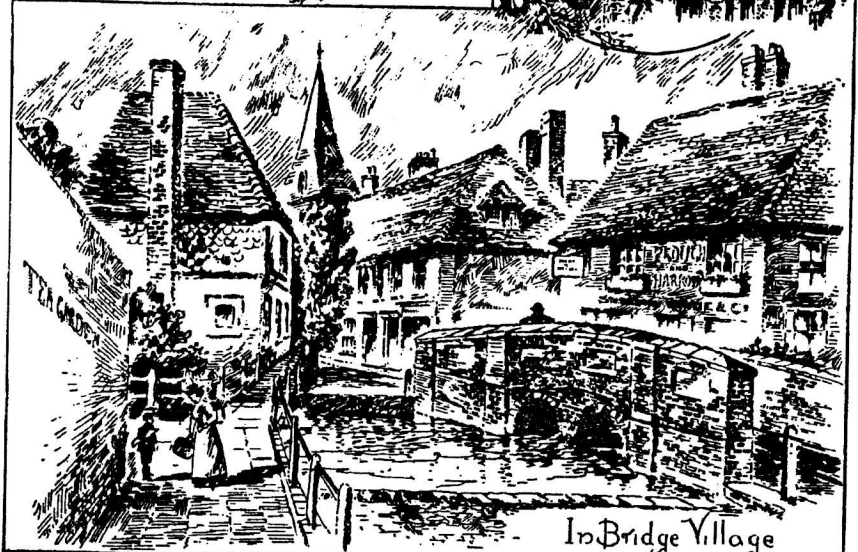




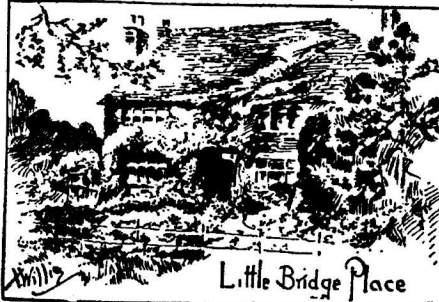
Natural Bridge  
over Nailbourne



St Peter's  
Church



In Bridge Village



Little Bridge Place



Unique  
Altar Tomb

## BRIDGE.

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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.

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 ROVLES SECOND WIFE OF SIR ARNOLD BRAEMS KNHT. DEPARTED THIS LIFE THE 27TH DAY OF MAY 1643 AND LYETH BVRIED IN THE MIDDLE 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