







THE CHURCH, BRIDGE.

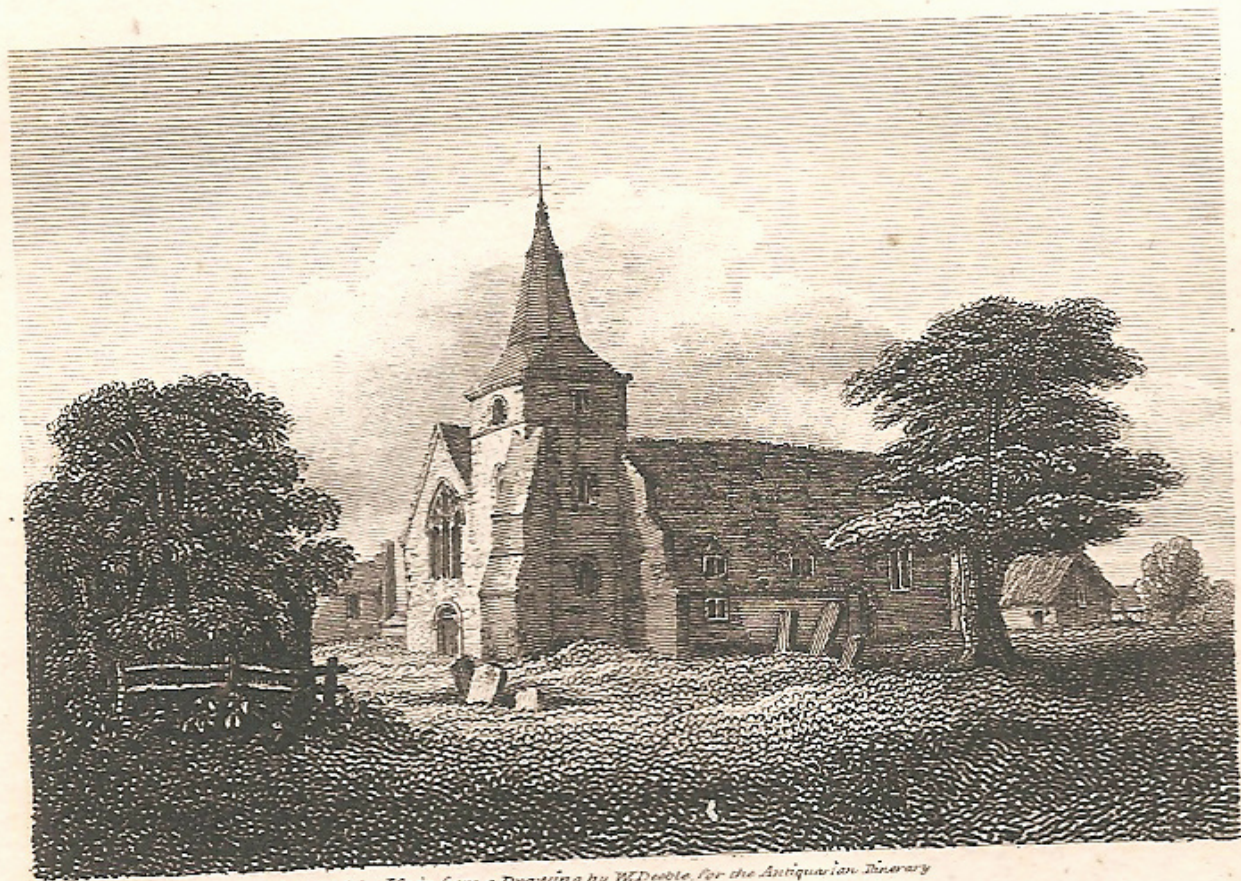


St. Peter's Church.





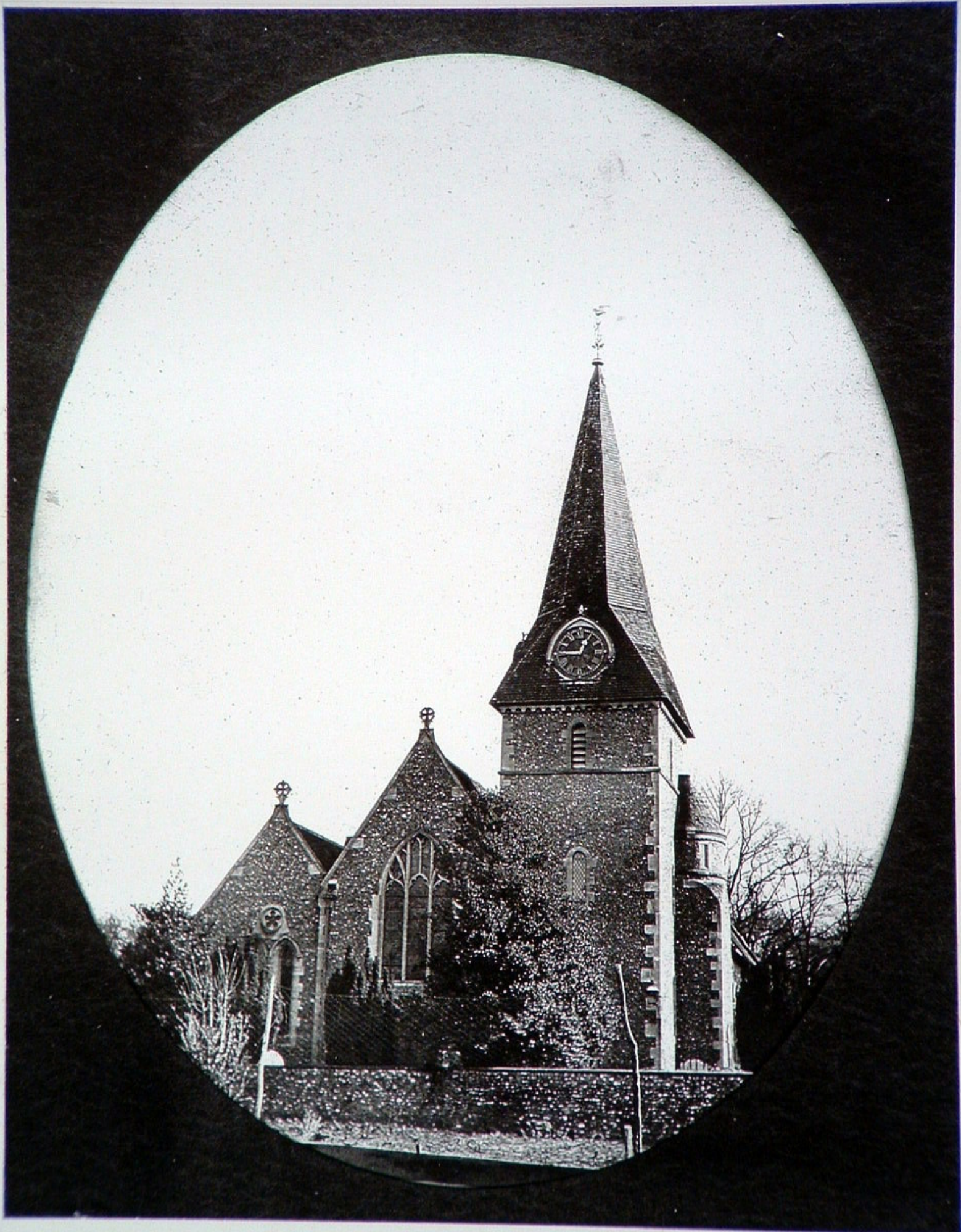


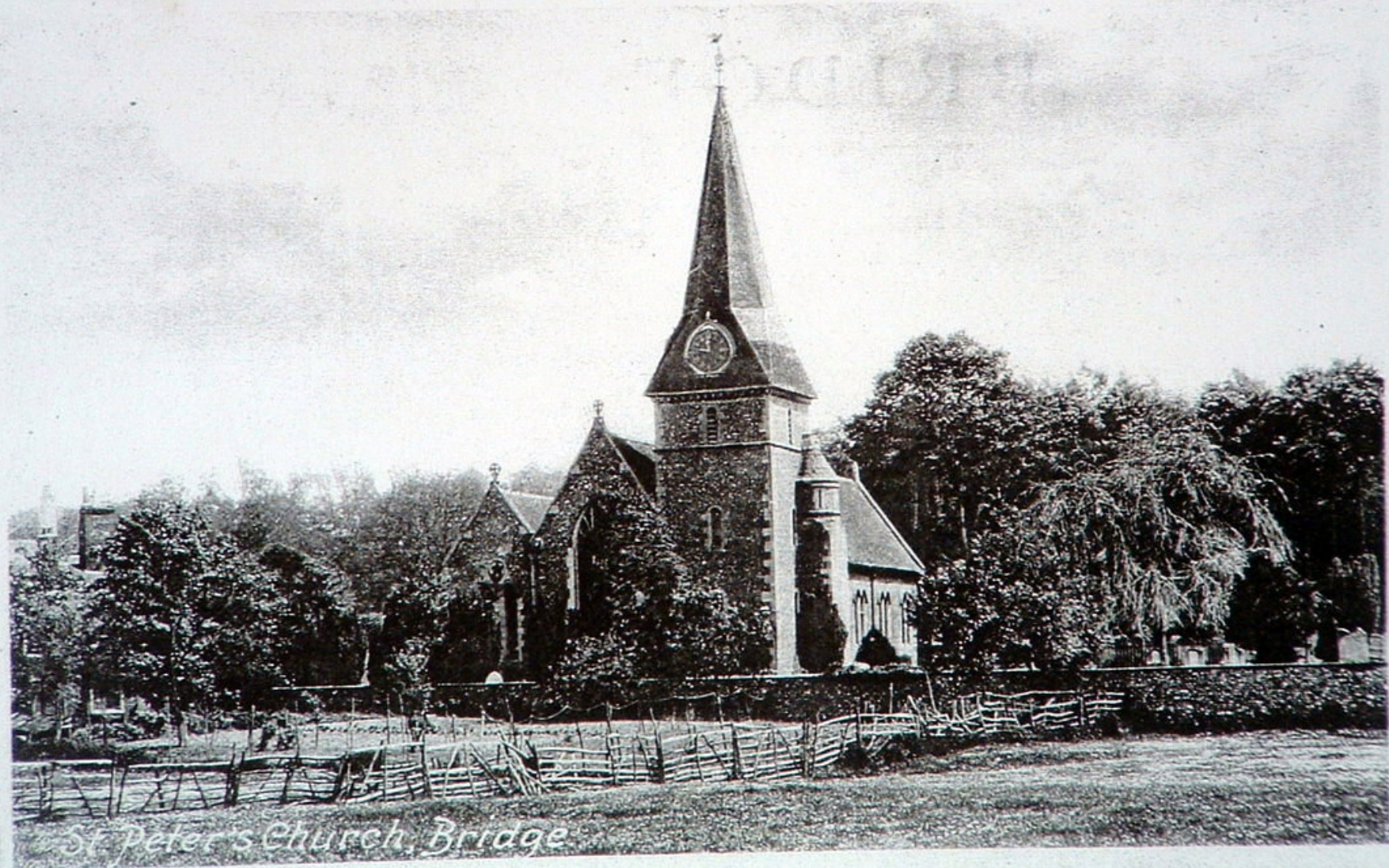


Engraved by J. Gray, from a Drawing by W. D. Noble, for the Antiquarian Treasury

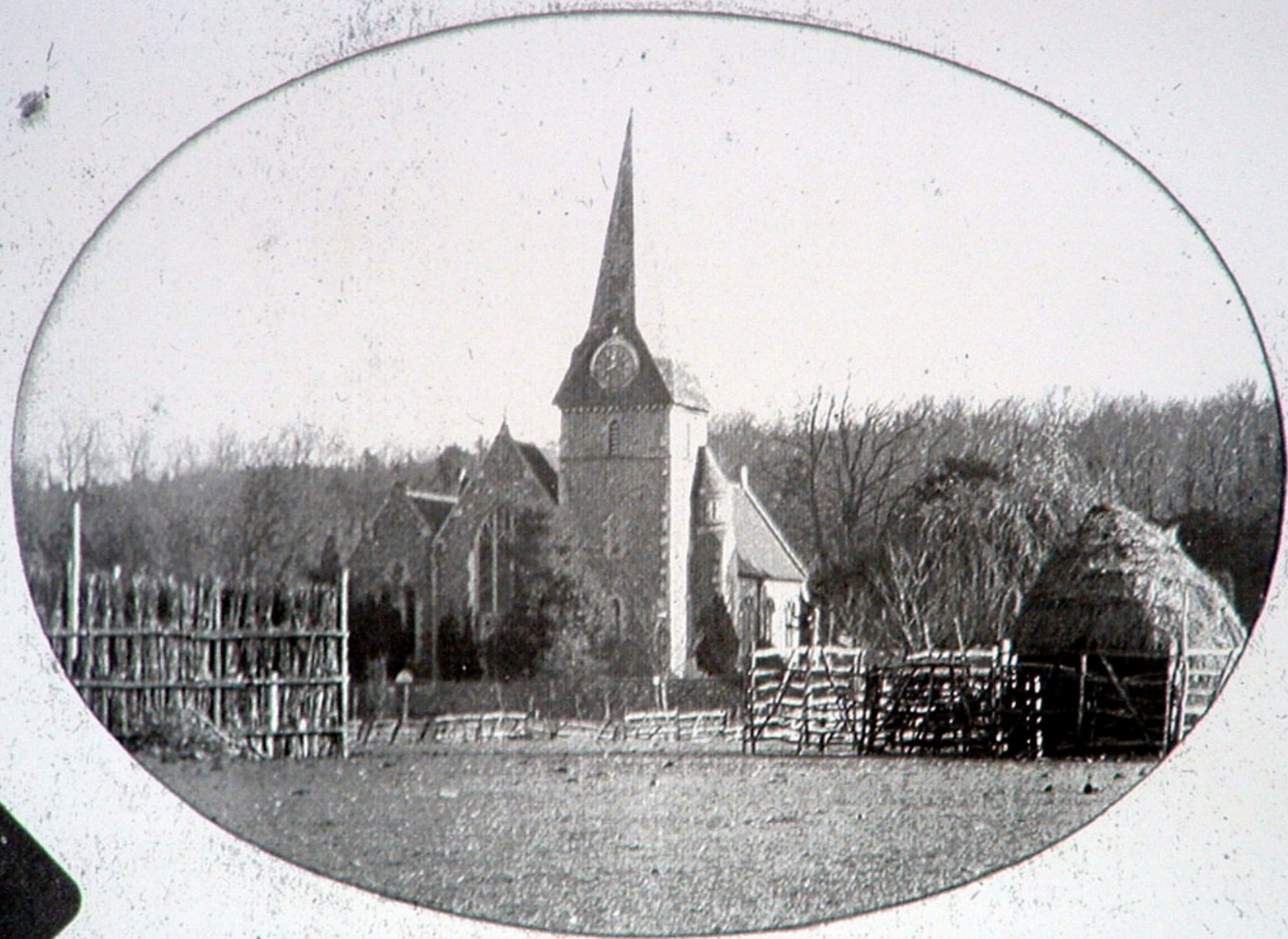
Bridge Church, Kent

Published for the Proprietors Nov. 1815, by W. Clarke, New Bond Street.





St. Peter's Church, Bridge



BRIDGE CHURCH





BRIDGE CHURCH-WEST VIEW











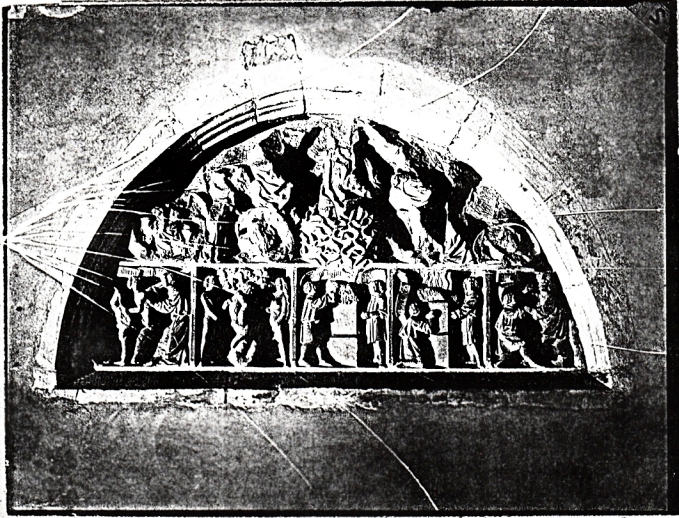




Anne Reddie







1931

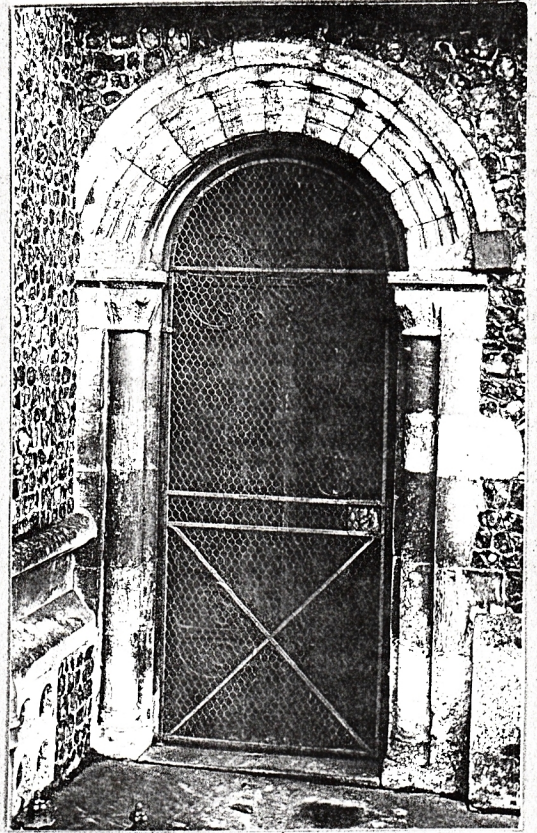
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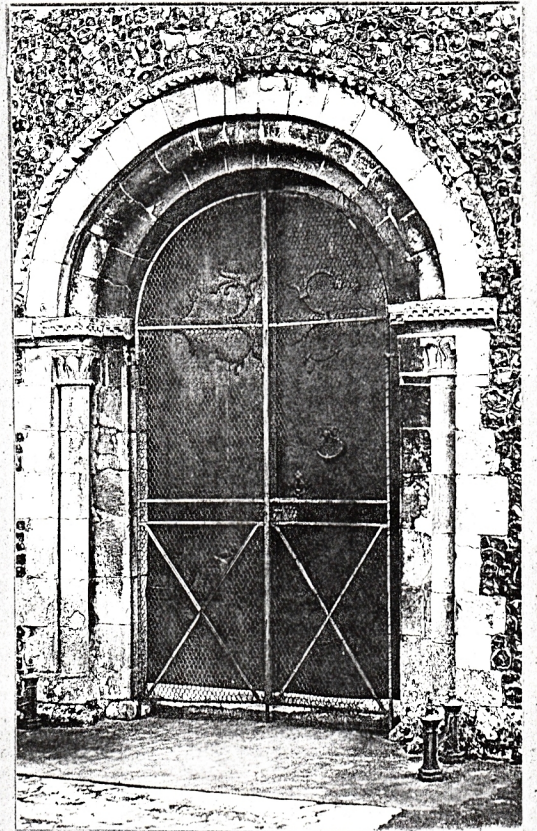


1931

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Bridge (Kant) St Peter's Church.

Steeple in a storm

Like many stories it began on a quite ordinary day. Bridge was either at lunch or dozing after it. The children were in the playground waiting for afternoon school to begin. Then it happened — an almighty clap of thunder simultaneous with lightning. The children squealed and rushed indoors as the rains came, and the village found itself the target of one of the most violent thunder storms in many a long day.

At the time Ernest Cassell was washing up in the kitchen of his Brewery Lane home. He glanced up and saw pieces of timber splintering from the church spire. Realising it had been hit he watched to see any signs of fire. Mercifully none appeared and he put through a call to the vicarage to report matters to me.

A preliminary inspection in torrential rain revealed a gaping hole in the steeple about sixty feet up and a considerable quantity of debris littering the churchyard.

Counting the Cost

Nothing much could be done until the rain stopped, save for telephoning churchwardens and the architect John Clague of *John Clague & Partners*. A hasty site meeting was fixed for when the storm was over but the sound of the fire brigade tearing along Bridge High Street found me back at the church, happily to discover we were not the object of their attentions. Does anybody know who was? Unconfirmed rumour said it was Highland Court!

Acting with great speed two representatives of *John Clague & Partners* were on site and had arranged for a builder to stand by for emergency repairs. Unfortunately the damage was beyond their reach but thanks to the telephone the architects were able to contact a steeplejack and he was on the job first thing the following morning. By an odd coincidence he was due to survey the weather vane at St. Mary's, Patixbourne on the Friday.

It could have been worse!

Steeplejack Peter Harknett had ladders up to the weather vane with incredible speed and to the astonishment of villagers, who had never seen the like. His is undeniably a highly-skilled profession. 'How *does* he do it?' was the question on everyone's lips!

An immediate and thorough inspection of the steeple, inside and out, produced the reassuring news that it could have been worse. The basic structure was untouched, the bulk of the damage being to the surface wooden shingles. However the beam that supported the enormous clock weight had been quite seriously split necessitating its replacement once the clockwork had run down and the weight come to rest at ground level.











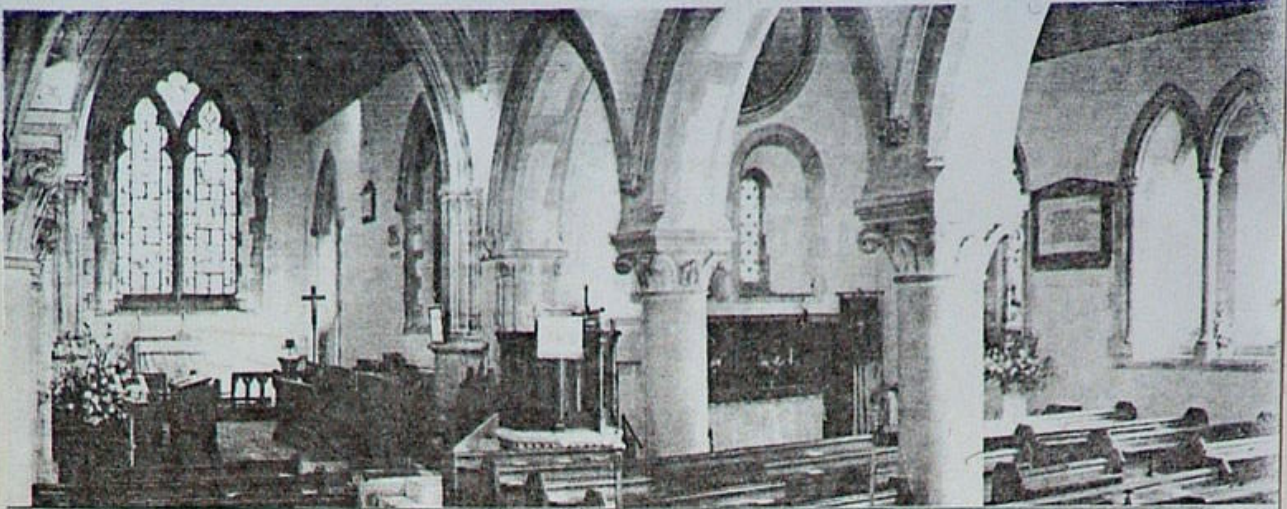












St. Peter's Church, from the west end.

The village of Bridge, straddling the main road from Dover to Canterbury, has been an important village since the Roman occupation of England. There was probably a Roman bridge across the river (cf. *Bruges* which has a similar name and site). There is however no village mentioned in the Domesday Book but there is a "Hundred of Brige" i.e. a meeting point for the villagers on the "Burne" Bishopsbourne, Patrixbourne and Bekesbourne and hence perhaps it had its chapel (not a chantry) built. There was certainly a Chapel on this site in Norman times, as may be seen from the history of the parish displayed in the church and from the Norman base of the tower as well as the arch over the West door, but it was in the Parish of St. Mary, Patrixbourne, then an important place since the Archbishop's Palace was there. The Hundred of Brige was part of the manor of Blecknersbury and was part of the possessions of St. Augustine's Abbey until the suppression of the monasteries by Henry VIII. In 1258 the church at Bridge was appropriated by Archbishop Boniface to the Prior and Convent of Merton in Surrey in which patronage they remained until the middle of the 15th century.

Bridge church has three aisles and a chancel with some Norman features remaining in the tower and the western doorway. There are three bells and there is a board above the belfry stating that the church and steeple were repaired by one Samuel Hills, Churchwarden in 1787. The pillars which separate the aisles are large for this size of church; the east end of the north aisle was formerly partitioned off for a school room. The font is small and though it appears to be old has nothing peculiar on it.

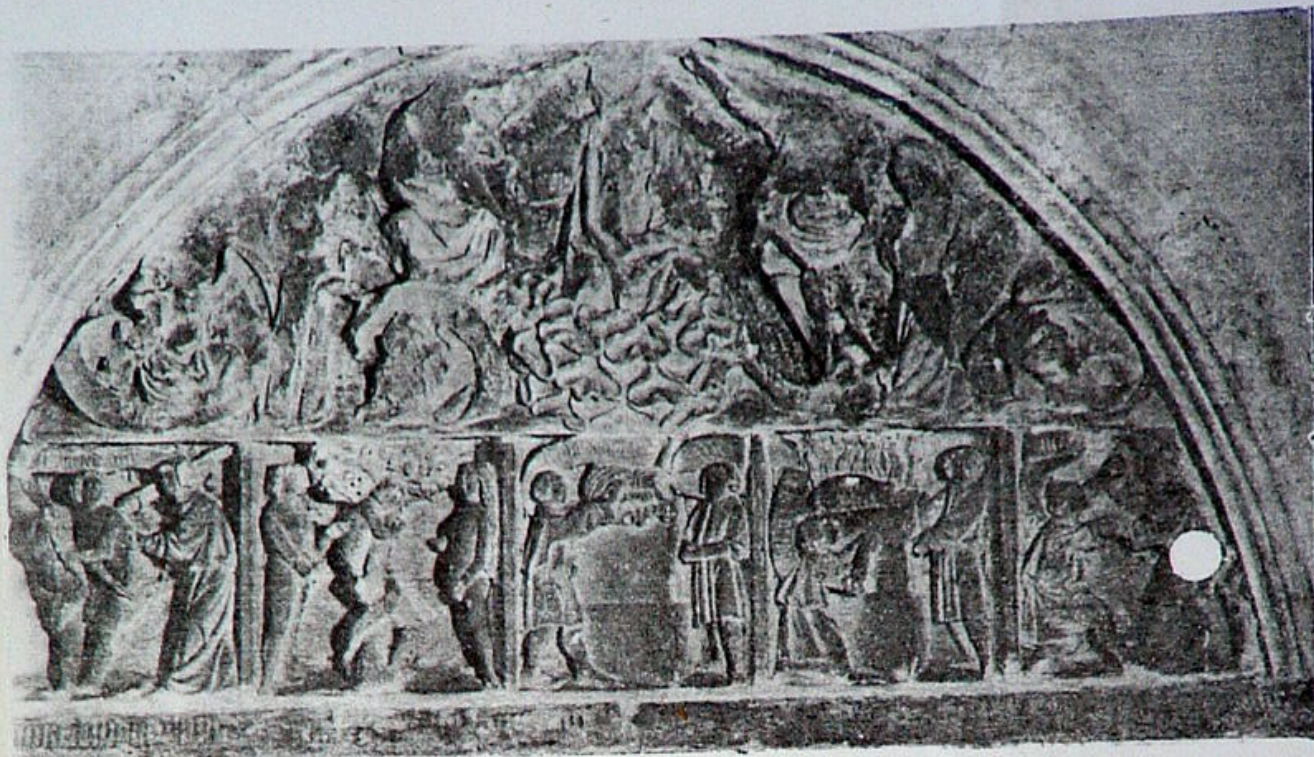
In the Chancel on the North wall there is a fine semi-circular Norman carving, all that survives of a lost doorway. It shows scenes from the Book of Genesis; in one sequence Adam and Eve in Eden listening to the Devils and then driven out by the Angel; in another the story of Cain and Abel. Below this carving is the stone figure of a robed priest, apparently cut in two, and reclining in two small recesses. He is Macobus Kasey, Vicar till 1512, and the carved scrolls on the opposite side of the Chancel must have been part of his tomb.



ST. PETER'S CHURCH

BRIDGE

ST. PE



The Norman carving in the Chancel, on the north wall.

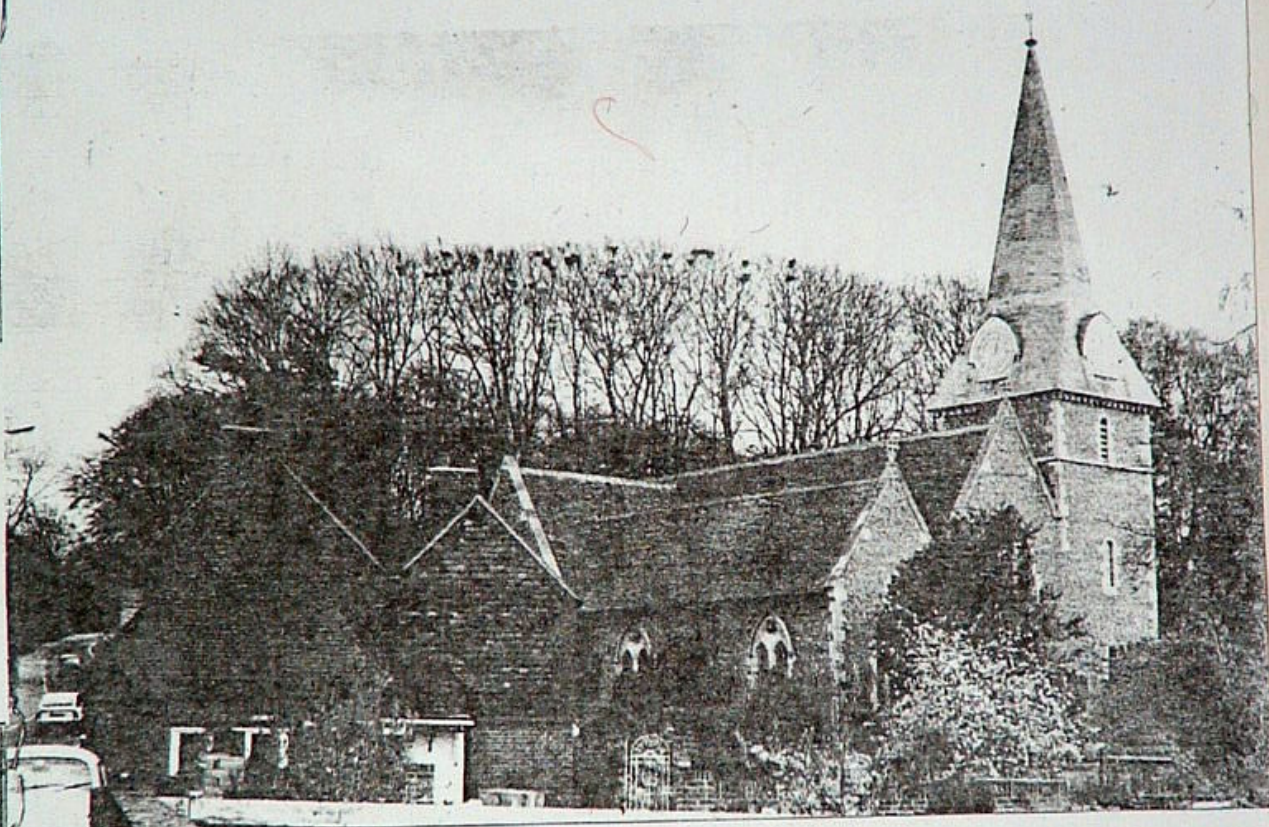
High on the East wall is a portrait thought to be the work of Cornelius Jansen, a noted painter of the time of Charles I, who is known to have stayed with Sir Arnold Braems of Bridge Place, who built Dover Harbour. His first wife Joan has a plaque on this same chancel wall. Her memorial is flanked by two marble carvings, one of a skull through which a serpent twines, the other a coat of arms. These are probably all we have of another forgotten tomb.

Detail: Adam and Eve and the Serpent.

Painting by Cornelius Jansen.



There are several interesting tablets in the Church – in the middle of the Chancel lies buried the second daughter of Sir Dudley Bigges of Chilham Castle, Master of the Rolls in 1643. Notice also in the left side aisle the tablet to Mr. Sicard who is one of the many people who lived in the village with Hugenot forbears. The church was restored by Mrs. Gregory of Bridge Hill in the middle of the 19th century and it is to her that we owe the striking Kentish flintstone of the exterior. She was not a native of the village but the daughter of Nathaniel Pattison of Congleton in Cheshire and whose grandfather founded the first silk mill in Congleton in 1752.



Peter's Church from High Street; the road began life as Watling Street.

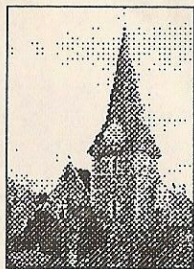
The village of Bridge if you have time and inclination, is worth further study. In 1793 Zechariah Cozens wrote: "The parish of Bridge is but small and the soil in general is but chalky and barren, producing in several places heath and coppice wood, though throughout the whole extent of the parish there is a beautiful variety of hill and dale. From the woods around Bridge we have a most delightful view of the Vales which are adorned with many a gentleman's seat," and in 1815 Dr. Haddy Jones, Assistant Surgeon to the 1st Life Guards returning from the Battle of Waterloo wrote that the "neatness of the farms and the mode of agriculture much impressed him between Dover and Canterbury."

A small distance to the south of the church is the house built by Sir Arnold Braems of which only the wing remains of the original structure: recently drawings of the original house were discovered in Amsterdam Museum and after Chilham Castle it was the largest country house in East Kent in the 17th century and had a large deer park and aviary. At a later date it belonged to the Reverend Edward Taylor of Bifrons who was a friend of George IV and Jane Austen. Much of the house is built with hand-made Dutch brick which was brought over from Holland and landed at Sandwich. A little further up the road from the church toward Dover lies "Englands Old Hole" which is reputed to be the place where the seventh Roman legion captured and slew the Britons in their last attempt to stem off the Roman invasion.



Bridge High Street in the quiet years earlier this century.

In 1829 when excavations were made, a number of Roman arms and skulls were discovered at a depth of five feet. The circular earthwork of the redoubt still remains in very good preservation after a lapse of more than 1900 years. The village main street has not changed a great deal since the middle of the 19th century. There is a fine example of a Tudor cottage in the middle and the White Horse public house is the scene of the famous brawl of Christopher Applegate, a friend of Christopher Marlowe who became famous in the English Army in the early 16th century. This incident is mentioned in the Canterbury Court records of 1598. Further up the street at the post office is the place where Field Marshall Lord Kitchener sent his first dispatches at the beginning of the First World War.



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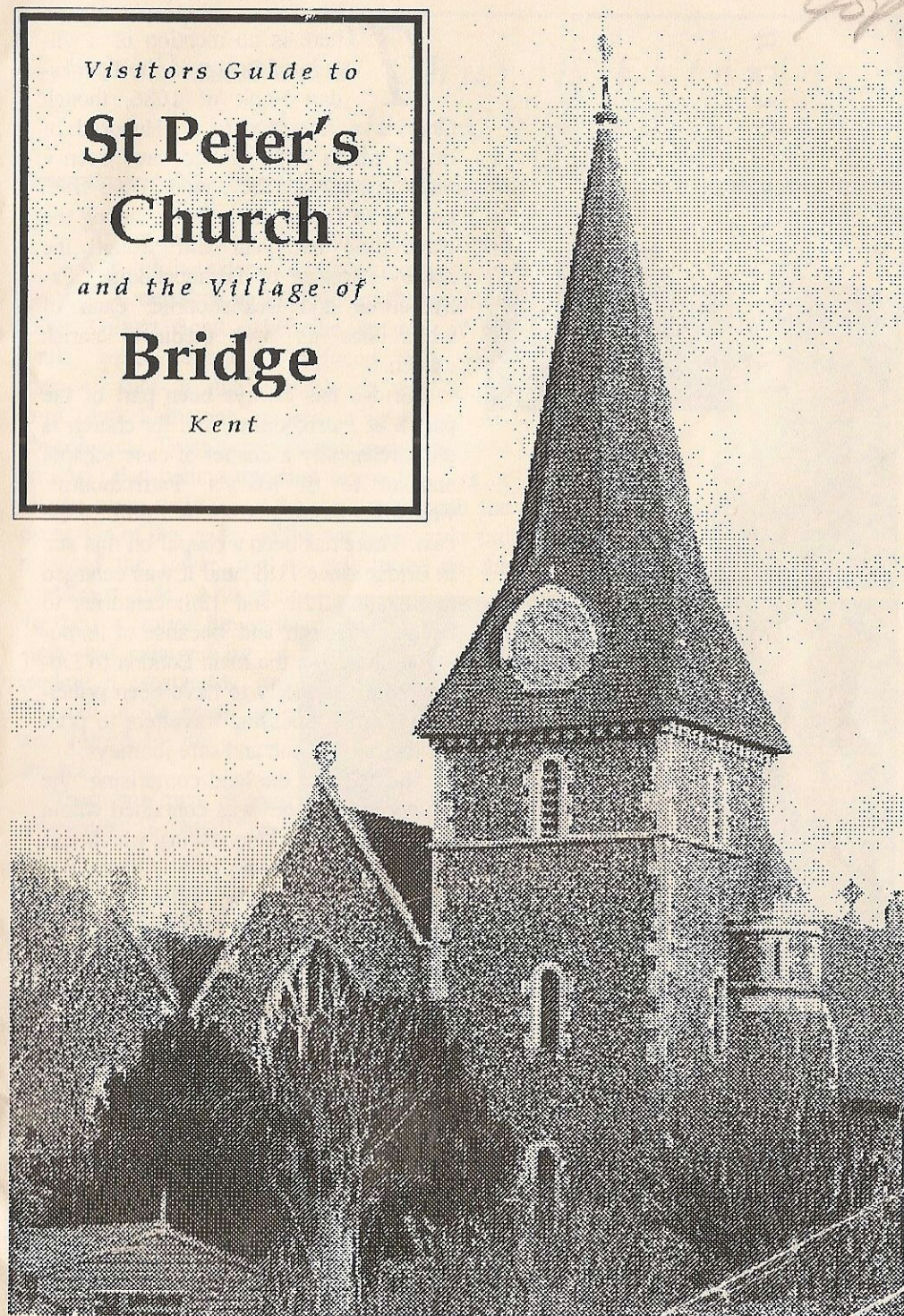
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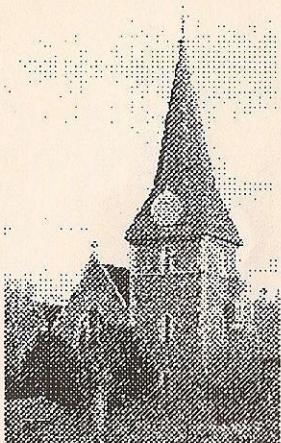
St Peter's Church

and the Village of

Bridge

Kent





There is no mention of a village of Bridge in the Domesday Book of 1086, though there is a reference to a 'Hundred of Brige' which is thought to have been a meeting point on the Roman road from London to Dover for villagers along the Nailbourne living in and around the nearby parishes of Bishopsbourne, Patrixbourne and Bekesbourne, each of which has its own medieval parish church.

Bridge has always been part of the parish of Patrixbourne, and its church is still technically a chapel-of-ease (chapel annexe) to St Mary's, Patrixbourne, which lies three quarters of a mile to the east. There has been a chapel on this site in Bridge since 1189, and it was enlarged through the 12th and 13th centuries to become a church, and because of its position alongside the main London to Dover road it is likely to have been principally used by passing travellers to pray for their protection and safe journeys.

Historically, the land comprising the 'Hundred of Brige' was contained within the manor of Blackmondsbury which was part of the possessions of St Augustine's Abbey in Canterbury, while in 1258 Bridge's chapel was appropriated by Archbishop Boniface to the Prior and Convent of Merton, Surrey, a situation that continued until the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII in 1538.

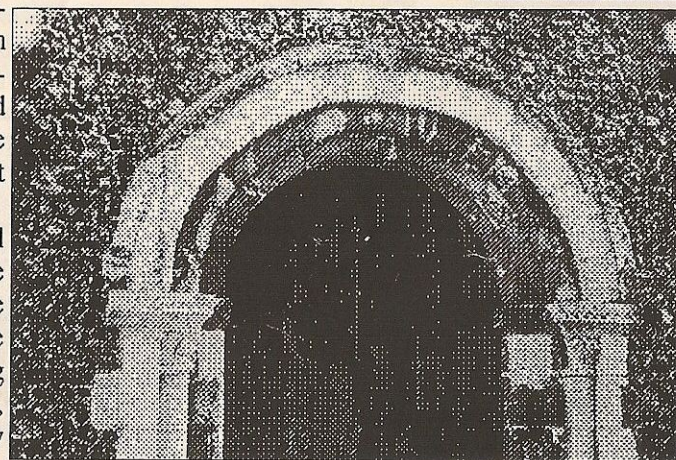
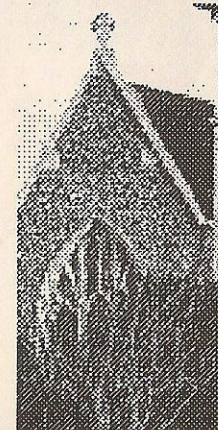
In the mid-19th century, at a time of large Victorian congregations, St Peter's was massively restored and enlarged principally through the generosity of Mrs Mary Gregory of Bridge Hill, who was the daughter of Nathaniel Pattison of Congleton in Cheshire, whose family had founded the first silk mill there in 1752.

St Peter's Church Exterior & Churchyard

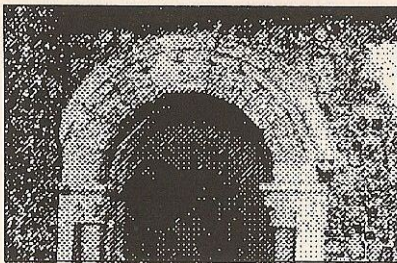
As seen today the church is the result of the extensive restoration work undertaken in 1859-60 by the architect Giles Gilbert Scott, when the outside of the walls were completely refaced with dark knapped flint- a fine example of the Kentish craft, and Bathstone facings. Canterbury Archaeological Trust surveyed the church in 1994 and said that behind this flint facing the core of all the main walls must be medieval, with the exception of the vestry on the north-east side and most of the tower and its stair-turret on the south-east side. Also during the restoration the north aisle was enlarged by extending it westwards, and the wall of the south aisle was raised to its present height..

There are two original doorways, a small one leading to the vestry in the north east corner by the side of the chancel showing deep chevron mouldings, and the west doorway through which you enter the church.

The west doorway is mid-to-late 12th century, and unlike virtually everything else on the exterior, was not totally renewed in 1860, its fine moulding standing out in bold relief, with carved capitals on the shafts and three weathered heads. The 3-light west window above it is in the early perpendicular style and the only late-medieval survival dating from the late 14th century and



West window, top.
West doorway, above.

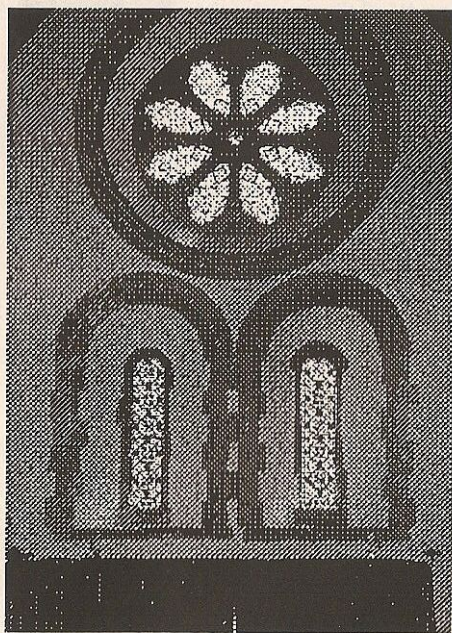


Vestry doorway

appears to contain much original stonework.

The original late 12th century tower had deteriorated to such an extent by the 17th or 18th centuries that it had proved necessary to support it with brick buttresses to the south-east and south-west. But in the 1859-60 restoration it was completely rebuilt above its medieval base, with a shingled spire and the addition of the south-east stair turret. The tower is hung with a ring of three bells, of which only the tenor bell, thought to have been cast in the 14th century by William le Belyetre of Canterbury, bears an inscription, reading: ANE: MARIA: GRACIA: PLENA: DUS: TECU.

The churchyard contains many interesting headstones dating from the early 17th century, and was extended to the west at the beginning of the 20th century, and although technically full since the 1980's, burials still occasionally take place in family plots. Kent County Council took over the responsibility for basic maintenance in the 1990's.



Wheel window and Norman windows in the south aisle

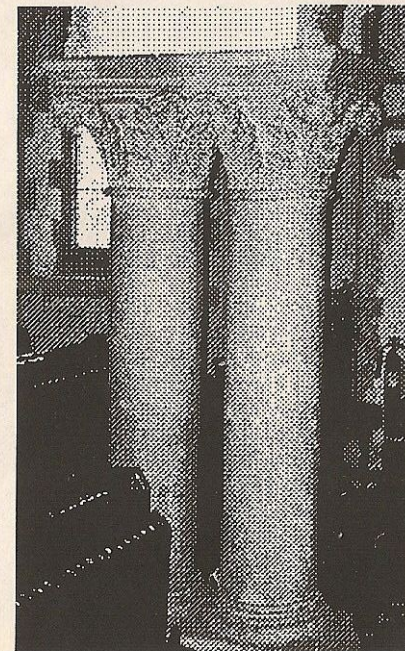
St Peter's Church Interior

St Peter's follows the traditional layout of three aisles and a chancel with a wooden barrel roof over the nave and plain wooden roofs over the side aisles. From the surviving remains Canterbury Archaeological Trust report says that there is no doubt that the nave, chancel, south aisle and tower base all date from the 12th century, and though it is possible that the nave may date from a century earlier there is no visible evidence for this. The south aisle and tower were added in the later 12th century, and the north aisle and north-east transept chapel date from the early 13th century.

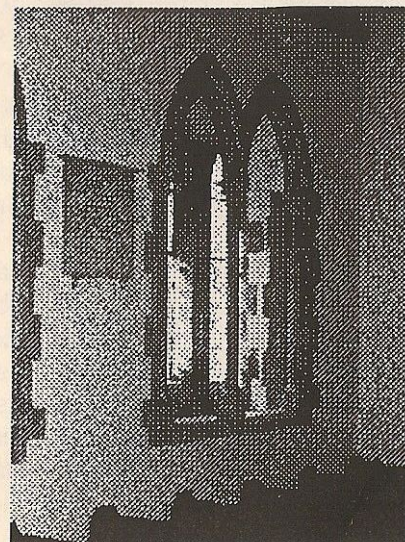
Though a small amount of Norman stonework is visible, almost all of what is seen today is Victorian work dating from the 1859-60 restoration when the south aisle wall was raised to its present height, and the north aisle extended west. At one time the eastern end of the north aisle was partitioned off for use as a schoolroom.

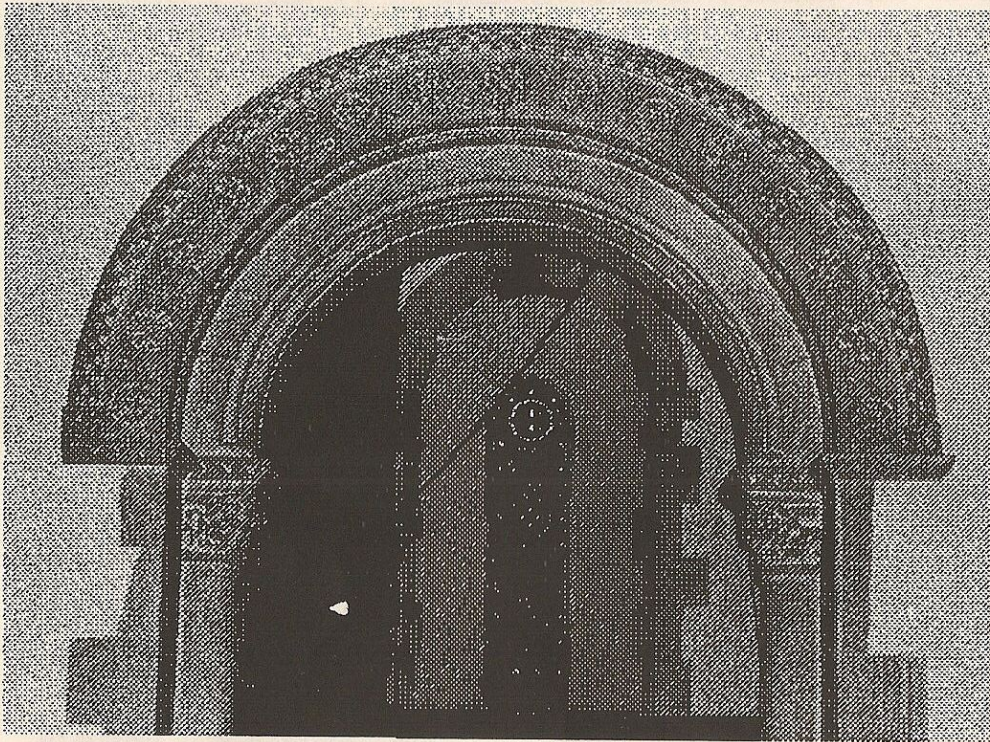
The columns in the church are generally considered disproportionately large for the size of building. On the north side the arcade is of four bays with the four arches supported by unusual coupled circular piers- formed from what may once have been square shafts, and crowned with floral capitals of Early English design. Pevsner writes that they are in about the same scale as the top two thirds of William de Sen's piers at Canterbury Cathedral, but paired E-W, not N-S.

The arcade on the south side is of three bays and the three arches are considered fine specimens of Early English work. The east end of the south aisle contains a huge wheel window set above two Norman windows which are deeply splayed and filled with stained glass. The south aisle windows are unusual as the centre shafts

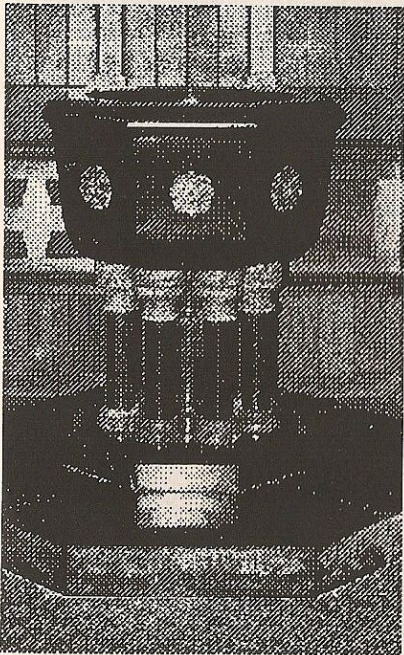


Double columns in the north aisle, above. South aisle window, below.





*Richly decorated tower arch, above.
Cornish red serpentine font, below.*



stand out by themselves in front of the glass. One of them contains a stained glass memorial to the memory of May, wife of Major Farwell of the 44th Regiment and daughter of Mr & Mrs Winter of Bridge Hill, who died in Madras in 1882

On the north side of the tower there is a fine stone arch with rich billet moulding supported by grotesque heads. A board above the belfry states that the church and steeple were repaired by Samuel Hills, churchwarden in 1787.

Standing on the floor of the tower the octagonal font is carved out of rare, and now unobtainable, Cornish red serpentine marble, and is considered to be of outstanding workmanship. Unusually, the bowl is supported by a central pillar itself surrounded by eight shafts, all in the same material. The glass in the west window was installed to the memory of Dr Amelius Sicard who died in 1880.

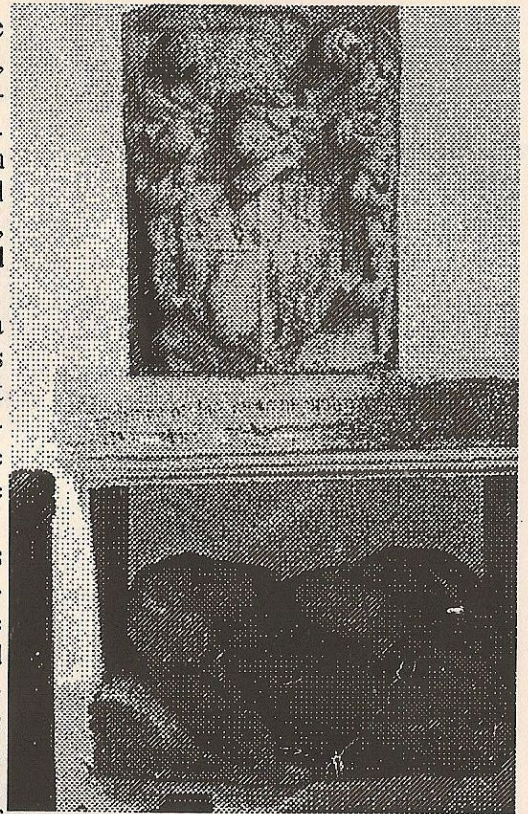
In the chancel on the north wall there is a fine semi-circular Norman carving, all that survives of a lost doorway, depicting scenes from the Book of Genesis. One sequence shows Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden listening to the Devil and then being driven out by an Angel, and another shows the story of Caine and Abel.

Below this carving is the figure of a robed priest, believed to be Marcobus Kaseley a vicar until 1512, apparently cut in two and reclining in two small recesses. The two carved scrolls on the opposite side of the chancel may have been part of his tomb.

There are several interesting tablets within the church two of which are particularly interesting. In the middle of the chancel floor lies buried the second daughter of Sir Dudley Bigges of Chilham Castle who was Master of the Rolls in 1643, and in the left side aisle there is a tablet to Mr Sicard who is one of the many people who lived in the village of Huguenot stock.

High on the east wall is a portrait attributed to Cornelius Jansen, a noted painter at the time of Charles I, who is known to have stayed with Sir Arnold Braems at nearby Bridge Place. Sir Arnold had settled in England from his native Low Countries and made his fortune first as a builder and then as harbourmaster of Dover docks, and there is a plaque to his first wife Joan on the south chancel wall. Her memorial is flanked by two marble carvings, on one side by a skull through which a serpent entwines, and on the other side by a coat of arms; these may be all that remain of a once much larger tomb.

The Victorian organ dates from 1860 and is typical of its period; it was renovated in 1975. The church interior was repainted in 1998 by a volunteer team drawn from the congregation.



*Memorial to Marcobus Kaseley, above.
Skull and crossbones carving, below.*



The Village of Bridge

Bridge is unique in being the only village in the country with only that one word as its name. The village straddles the old Roman road known as Watling Street in a valley where the seasonal Nailbourne stream flows north out of the head of the Elham valley to turn right angles east on its way out to the sea. Watling Street was constructed by the Romans to serve as their overland route from Dover to London via Rochester, and for almost 2000 years was used by pilgrims, private and commercial travellers, and not least by the military on their way to and from battles on the Continent.

So from the earliest times Bridge became established through its role in tending to the needs of all this human traffic and their horses, due to the availability of fresh water, the first they would encounter before or after travelling over the long high ridge of the downs to and from Dover. It was finally by-passed in 1976 to relieve what had by then become intolerably and dangerously high levels of heavy articulated goods vehicles to and from the continent, but only after protesting villagers had created their own chaos by blocking the High Street in a series of sit-in protests until the Government was forced to act.

Along with vast tracts of East Kent, the Garden of England, hop growing in Bridge was a major feature of agriculture in the surrounding countryside and covered an extensive acreage. Until mechanisation was introduced in the 1950's, at harvest time for a fortnight every September large numbers of hop pickers and their families travelled down from south and east London, and lived in specially built huts on the farms. Hops were a very valuable commodity and for centuries were subject to double tithes of

20 per cent which had to be paid annually to the established Church until the 1920's, when the system was abolished by Parliament.

Although just under three miles from Canterbury, Bridge boasts a wider variety of amenities than most villages in the area, including three public houses, the White Horse- traditionally the travellers hostelry, the Red Lion- traditionally frequented by the military, and the Plough and Harrow- still very much the villagers' pub. There is also a surgery, veterinary practice, baker, newsagent, hairdresser, photographers studio, small supermarket, combined chemist and post office/bank, restaurant, and night club. All this combines to make Bridge an



Bridge High Street looking north from Brewery Lane.

attractive and much sought after village in which to live, which is reflected in its premium property values.

The 1960's saw three housing developments within the village: to the east in Riverside, parallel to the High Street, to the west in Western Avenue, and to the south in Bridge Down. Since then apart from infills

there has been little housing built, although the local landowner Lord Conygham is keen to develop the land between Riverside and the bypass for affordable housing. In 2000 planning permission was granted for a new surgery to be built along the Patrixbourne Road to replace one in the centre which had outgrown the practice.



Bridge High Street looking north from Bifrons Walk

Country Houses Around Bridge

Bridge is fortunate to have a number of notable houses close to it. A little way along the Bourne Park road, south-west of the churchyard, lies Bridge Place which was built in the 17th century by Sir Arnold Breams to a large C shape plan using hand made Dutch bricks he had imported through Sandwich. At the time it was the largest house in East Kent

after Chilham Castle and boasted a deer park and an aviary, but its vast size made it uneconomic to run, and in the 18th century a new owner had all but one wing pulled down. In the early 19th century it belonged to Edward Taylor of nearby Bifrons, a friend of George IV, and also of novelist Jane Austen; since the 1960's it has been home to Bridge Country Club.

Further along the same road about half a mile from the village Bourne House can be glimpsed set at the end of a long drive. An outstanding red brick and stone Queen Anne mansion of fine proportions and listed Grade I, it is in private ownership and not open to the public.

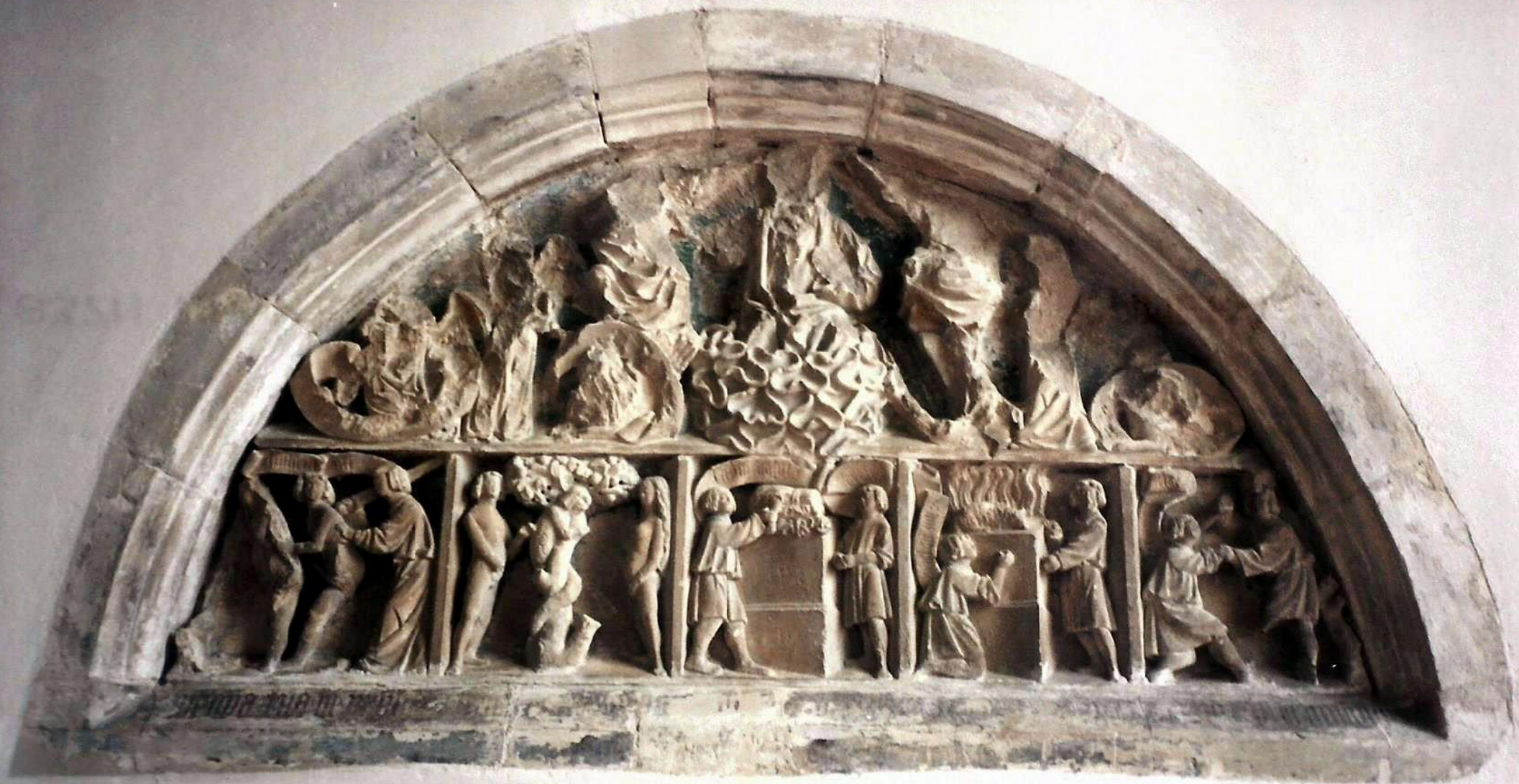
Higham Park, which lies off the top of Bridge Hill to the south of the village, was extended in the early 20th century by wrapping a new stone classical style structure around three sides of a much earlier building. It was inherited by Count Louis Zborovski who built outrageously powerful racing cars fitted with First World War aero engines made famous by author Ian Fleming in his childrens story *Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang*. Also on the estate to entertain his house party guests Count Zborowski built a miniature scale steam railway, and was active in the promotion of the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway. The house was commandeered by the Army in the Second World War, and for some years afterwards became a hospital annexe.

There was once a fourth house, Bifrons, which stood halfway between Bridge and Patrixbourne; it had been built in the mid-17th century and remodelled by the Victorians 200 years later. It was demolished after the Second World War during which time, like Higham Park, it had been commandeered by the army to augment Canterbury's extensive garrison.

In both World Wars Bridge was home to numerous temporary training and transit camps for large numbers of troops before they continued their journey along the old Roman road to Dover to fight on the Continent.











B351

JOANE THE SECOND
HARFLET OF
WIFE OF S. ARNOLD
THIS LIFE THY
EVRIED IN THE
IN DOVE OF
A MONUMENT
MEMORY
ELIZABETH THE
DUDLEY
MASTER OF
S. ARNOLD
LIFE THE
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Annam of the...
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KANE THE SECOND DAUGHTER OF WALTER GO
HARFLET OF BEAUMBOURNE ESQ THE FIRST
WIFE OF S^r ARNOLD BRAEMS KN DEPARTED
THIS LIFE THE 10th DAY OF JULY 1643 AND WETH
BURIED IN THE CHURCH OF ST. MARTIN
IN DONOR IN THE WEST SIDE WHERE THERE IS
A MONUMENT ERECTED TO HER EVERLASTING
MEMORY:

ELIZABETH THE SECOND DAUGHTER OF S^r
DYDLEY DIGGS OF CHILHAM CASTLE KN
MASTER OF THE ROYLES SECOND WIFE OF
S^r ARNOLD BRAEMS KN DEPARTED THIS
LIFE THE 17th DAY OF MAY 1643 AND
LYETH BURIED IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS CHANCEL
WHERE HER NAME IS INGRAVEN AND FOR
WHOM THIS MONUMENT IS ERECTED



