

IT lies beyond the scope of this work to enter upon the story of Bridgwater during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Broadly, one may speak of the days preceding the reign of William and Mary as being, in a sense, ancient. And the new spirit which came in with the Prince of Orange was the precursor — if not the medium — of what is summed up in the word modern. Yet to-day there exist in the town some links with ancient times ; some reminiscences of old-world life and thought. They can only be here touched upon sparingly, and in a manner which is confessedly inadequate and slight.

The ordinary visitor to the town may be apt to complain that he can see but few traces of its antiquity. This is to some extent true. Yet if he will exercise a little diligence and some patience, he will find himself surrounded by many memories of the past. The old parish church has changed but little in outward appearance since the latter part of the fourteenth century. It stands to-day even as then, in the midst of the houses which grew up around it. The narrow passage leading to it from the High Street (until lately known as *Danger's Ope*) has always been there. Within the church the main lines of the building are unchanged from mediæval days. The western arch, the aumbry and piscina in the chancel, and the hook from which the old rood once swung, are as they were five hundred years ago. The Elizabethan chalice which is still used at the service of Holy Communion has been used by worshippers who were living before the old order of worship passed away, and when the chantries, the many altars, and the full mediæval services were in daily evidence. The parish registers go back to 1558 ; they are full of signatures and of entries which are venerable in every way. There one can see the signatures of Wills, Devenish, and George Wotton ; there occur the pathetic entries at the time of the Civil War, recording the burial of many a soldier whose name was unknown. The three and a half centuries of duration of the registers are a real link with past days.

It is the same with the streets. Their course and direction have changed but little for ages past. Eastover, in the old days, began where now the main road branches off to join the Bath Road, at the *Queen's Head* Inn. There stood the East Gate, so furiously stormed in the time of the siege, and upon which, a century earlier, a quarter of poor Abbot Whiting's body was impaled. Near to the

*Queen's Head* was the Hospital or Priory of St. John, which finds its modern representative in the Eastover Church of St. John the Baptist. Fore Street is exactly as of yore ; the bridge is on the very spot where Briwere's great bridge was built ; the Cornhill, though changed in appearance, is identical in outline with old times. St. Mary's Street has many old houses in it still ; Mary Court, the old vicarage, the beautiful house now occupied by Mr. Willis, and the Priory. It is as narrow as it was in the fourteenth century, and its boundaries have not changed half an inch. Friarn Street is but little changed from the thirteenth century, save where the old buildings were taken down just above Friarn Lawn, leaving now a rather distressful gap. It is terribly narrow up at the Penel-Orlieu end, and so the friars must have found it to be in 1250. North Street is partly new and partly old ; but Moat Lane shows where the old moat ran. West Street is very old. Originally it stood outside the West Gate ; now, alas ! the old gate has gone. High Street has lost its group of houses known as the Island, stretching from the *Bristol Arms* to Mansion House Lane, but the old drain which served the butchers' stalls can still be seen, close to the Old Oak Inn. North Gate and South Gate are no more ; each was close to a stream which in some way served as a protection to the town. Clare Street is full of queer old premises ; so is Old Oak Lane. Some of the houses hereabouts are of immense age. Dampiet Street, King Street (a continuation of which was formerly known as Frog Lane, near to which was a bridge), and Blake Street form a most ancient quarter of the old town, in which was situate the town mill. Binford House probably preserves the name of a former ford over the river.

The Castle is no more, save one tiny remnant at the top of Chandos Street. But the splendid Norman Water Gate, close to Messrs. Major's offices on the West Quay, is in excellent condition. Through it, probably, many a boat-load of stores passed from the river into the Castle in William Briwere's day. Castle Street is fairly modern, but its cellars beneath the houses were once parts of the underground storage of the Castle itself. The Castle keep was in King Square. Old Saint Bridget's Church, I think, was a little northward of the Mount. Holy Trinity Church, close by where the South Gate once stood, commemorates the favourite Trinity chantry in St. Mary's, and nearly opposite to it formerly stood the Chapel of St. Saviour, built by a merchant, one William Pole. Dr.

Morgan's School, which now embraces the former St. James's School, is a true relic of the past. Its foundation is of late date, yet it is curiously linked with mediaeval times by its having absorbed some small endowments which originally were attached to the chantries in St. Mary's Church. One wishes that all the chantry endowments had been devoted to so good a purpose.

The municipal offices, and their appendages, are of great age. The charters are a mine of wealth in themselves. Indeed, a book might well be written on the development of town government in England, as instanced by the charters and documents of Bridgwater. It is a study in itself, and is of surpassing interest. John Kendall was the first mayor, in 1469. The maces date from 1660, and they are of great beauty. No serious trouble has shaken the borough to its foundations, as happened in 1685, when Monmouth came within its gates, and the story of the progress of the government of Bridgwater is much on a par with that of many other ancient English towns. But it was and is a port as well as a borough, and the importance of the great river and sea trade was never neglected or forgotten in the olden time. Bridgwater became what she is by the aid of the River Parret and the Severn Sea, and all her history is bound up in these great waterways. The trade on the river to-day is the truest link of all with the days when Bridgwater traded with the ports of Ireland, Flanders, France, and Spain, and when her ships and mariners took their share in the daring expeditions of Elizabethan times.

There is one building in the town which represents in a most interesting manner the expansion of thought which was an outcome of the religious upheaval in England in the sixteenth century, known as the Reformation. Expansion of thought usually ends in divergence of the lines of thought. It was so here. The teaching and influence of John Norman, and all the tendency of the like-minded people who followed him — with many others also — resulted in the building, in 1688, of the old Dampiet Street Chapel. It was established, in the first instance, on Presbyterian lines. Norman can hardly have ministered there himself, for the exclusive laws of that period forbade him, and the Five-Mile Act would be a barrier. Nevertheless in 1688 there was a building put up, and a minister, the Rev. John Moore, officiated therein in that, the first year of the reign of

William of Orange and Mary. It was an auspicious year in which to commence ; it was the inaugurative year of something like freedom of worship and freedom in religious methods. Mr. Moore was succeeded by his son John Moore, junr., M.A. (1717-47), and it seems probable that he adopted Arian views. *This was probably the theology of his successors Matthew Towgood (1747-55) and Thomas Watson (1755-93).* Mr. Howel (1793-1803) exercised his ministry at the time when the Western Unitarian Society was active, and no doubt causing a good deal of division in the older congregations. *His sentiments were decidedly Unitarian, and he did not hesitate to avow them.\** Dampiet Street Chapel has since then been the centre of Unitarian teaching in the town.

The chapel has an old-world air about it, and it is clear that it can hardly have been much altered since first it was built, in Jacobean times. There is a calm within it, and in the quiet street where it is situated, which seems to speak of the days when many men sought to escape from the hurly-burly of strife, and to settle down in the green pastures of a quiet nook where they might worship after their own desire, all undisturbed. It is a result partly of the Commonwealth period, partly of Monmouth's blustering days, partly again of James the Second's wretched rule, and, yet once more, of the emancipation which came in with William the Third. The chapel is a historic landmark in the town, showing at what time religious convictions — having then grown fiercely divergent — consolidated into a new society, possessing a visible habitation of its own. No student of history can pass by it without gathering his lesson from the story which more than two centuries of its existence and duration have to teach.

One suburb of Bridgwater is still, and will ever be, replete with memories of old. This is the field of Sedgemoor. There can hardly be found a more inspiring walk than to go out from Bridgwater along the Weston Zoyland road, and, just before reaching the village, turn to the left down past the quiet houses and orchards, until the open moor appears. There, bounded by the little road on one side, and by a long drove, is the battlefield. The course of the old Bussex Rhine, filled up long ago, can still be traced, and one can stand on the very spot where the Royalists poured their deadly fire into the ranks of Monmouth's deluded followers, and broke their

brave attack. The spot is absolutely peaceful; only the browsing cattle are there. Chedzoy tower, in the near distance, has its tale to tell too ; so also have the Langmoor drove, the Black Ditch, Parchey Bridge, Peasy Farm, Bradney Green, and Bradney Lane. All these are, in a sense, hallowed places. They are the abiding relics of the last great revolt of English folk against an English sovereign — a revolt headed by an adventurer who was without principle or moral stability, and who cozened the Somerset people into the belief that he was the champion of the Protestant cause. All the area within the boundary made by the five church towers — Bridgwater, Weston Zoyland, Sutton Mallet, Chedzoy, Bawdrip — is overflowing with incident and with history. At night time the silence is almost oppressive. By day the lazy calm of the fields seems to try to efface from memory the brief yet bloody and fateful fight which awakened the echoes of the great moor in 1685. These still pasture-lands are, and will ever be, eloquent of the melancholy truth that the paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Such are some of our inheritances from the past doings of old Bridgwater times. The chain is a long one, and some of its links are weakening. Yet, such as they are, they appeal to the imagination and to the moral instinct. They suggest that the forces and passions and influences which move mankind are even now as they were of yore, and that these do not change with the rolling years.

#### NOTES

During the course of writing the foregoing chapters, a considerable number of questions have been received referring to incidents, places, and things connected with Bridgwater. It would be difficult, in attempting to deal with even a few of these, to weave the answers to them into a continuous narrative. It is, therefore, thought better to refer to them *singulariter* and with necessary brevity.

*The oldest existing gravestone in St. Mary's churchyard.* — The alterations in the positions of many old gravestones have been very numerous in past days, and they have resulted in the loss, breakage, and defacement of some most interesting inscriptions. One of the churchyard paths is paved with old headstones, many of them being cut in two, and damaged in other ways. Other such stones abound within the church walls. The oldest known gravestone is situated at the west side of the tower, and bears the following inscription : HERE LYETH THE BODY OP

AGNES GROVE WHO DEPARTED THE FEIF OF  
FEBRUARY 1635

*Oldmixon's grave.* — It has been frequently stated that the body of John Oldmixon the historian lies in Bridgwater churchyard. This appears to be an error. There is an Oldmixon vault containing *ye body of Elinor Oldmixon daughter of John Bawdon who departed this life ye 3 of Aug. 1689, also ye body of Hannah ye daughter of John and Elinor Oldmixon who departed this life ye 13 of Novem-ber 1689.*" John Bawdon was buried here in 1643, Elinor, his wife, in 1645. But it is practically certain that the historian is buried elsewhere.

*Bradney Chapel, near Chedzoy.* — On November 5th, 1330, a licence was granted for the alienation in mortmain by Simon de Bradeny of certain property, for a chaplain to celebrate divine service daily, on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday at the altar of St. Mary in the church of St. Michael the Archangel, Bawdrip ; and on Wednesday and Friday in the chapel of All Saints, Bradeny, for the souls of the said Simon, Beatrice his wife, and others. Bradney Chapel is marked on the map of Sedgemoor, which dates from the time of Antony Paschall, rector of Chedzoy, 1686. It is now utterly destroyed. Its former position was adjacent to the present Bradney Lane.

*The Holy Well of Wembdon.* — Wembdon Church is dedicated to St. George, but the famous well, which is now in a garden rather more than half-way up Wembdon Hill, on the left side as one goes out from Bridgwater, was called St. John's Well, because the prior and brethren of St. John's Priory, Bridgwater, were the possessors of the advowson. In mediaeval times this well was resorted to by many pilgrims and others by reason of the supposed healing power of it (*sic* its) waters. As lately as 1903 people were still asking for bottles of the water, chiefly for diseases and weakness of the eyes.

*Chilton Trinity Church bells.* — These are four in number. The inscriptions upon them are exceedingly difficult to read. No. 3 bell has *Sancte Peter et Paule orate pro nobis*. No. 2 bell dates from 1635. No 4 bell is inscribed, *You that heare me, Marke my call, Awake from sin*. Its date is 1656, thus showing that during even the troubled days of the Commonwealth the church's work was not laid aside. In the inscription on No. 1 bell the words *nomen Domini* occur, but the remainder of the sentence cannot be identified.

*The Bread Charity.* — Gilbert Bloyse, who died in 1717, left moneys for the weekly distribution of loaves of bread *in ye Parish Church of Bridgwater, equally amongst twelve poore people of ye said Burrough and Parish.* The loaves, now thirty in number, are still given away, every Sunday afternoon at four o'clock, to selected poor and needy people who assemble to receive them in the north porch.

*Market crosses.* — Bridgwater had two; one, the High Cross, by the existing Corn Market, and the other — frequently referred to as the Pig Cross — near the old West Gate. The name Pig Cross had nothing to do with pigs. Its origin was *Horsey Pigen*s, or *Pignes*, or *Pegenes*, ultimately abbreviated to Peg or Pig. Horsey boundaries ran up to those of Bridgwater. The Pig Cross was still standing in 1800.

*Penel-Orlieu.* — Numerous inquiries have been made as to the origin of this curious name, which now is allocated to the part of the town east of where the old West Gate stood, as far as the west end of High Street, and round by the Cattle Market. In early days there was a Bridgwater family named Pynel. In their honour, presumably, a street was named, called variously Pynel, Pynell, Pynelle, or Penelle Street. The name may, of course, be a corruption of the famous family name Paganel or Paynel. Pynel Street extended from about the West Gate to a spot somewhere near the west end of the present Market House Inn. Over the entrance to the inn is inscribed the date 1563. Extending eastwards, and veering round in a northerly direction towards the North Gate, was another street called variously Orlof Street, Orloes Street, Olav Street, Orloue Street, Orlewe Street, or Orlowe Street. These streets eventually became one, and their junction produced the combination Pynel-Orlewe, which finds its modern representative in Penel-Orlieu.

*Mr. John Chubb.* — This gentleman came of an old family that had long been settled in Bridgwater. His drawings and paintings (which the writer has had the great pleasure of seeing) are works of real genius, and they hit off the life and manners of the eighteenth century in Bridgwater in a remarkable way. His sketches of scenery, and of places in the town which have now ceased to exist, are of surpassing interest. I am indebted to Mr. John B. Chubb, the present head of the family, for his great kindness in permitting me to see his ancestor's sketches.

*Bridgwater in the United States.* — Our old town, like many old English boroughs, has its daughter in the vigorous New World in America. Transatlantic Bridgwater is in the State of Massachusetts. What was once the original town is now divided into Bridgwater, East Bridgwater, West Bridgwater, and the city of Brockton. Thus in a measure are reproduced our own Eastover and the West Borough. Brockton, which was the north parish, it is said, contains more of the descendants of the early settlers from England than the other divisions. I am indebted to the courtesy of Mr. Edward A. Hewett, the town clerk of Bridgwater, for this information. The Selectmen are Mr. William Bassett, Mr. Harrison D. Packard, and Mr. Edwin D. Josselyn. Mr. Edmund L. Linnett is the town treasurer. Their municipal seal contains the castle and bridge of our own town arms, and is inscribed *incorporated 1656.*

*The Bell Foundry.* — In Dr. Raven's excellent book *The Bells of England*, he refers to a group of towns of which Bridgwater is one, which possessed bell foundries, but of which he does not give any particulars. A friend of Mr. A. O. Pain, of Dampiet House, Bridgwater, who was recently travelling in Wales, found a bell in a church near Tenby, bearing the founder's name : *T. Pike, Bridgwater.* The foundry was in St. Mary's Street, opposite the church. Enmore Church has two bells, the third and the tenor, cast by George Davis of Bridgwater, in 1796. In the same church also is a bell. No. 5, which was cast in 1825 by J. Kingston of Bridgwater. A bell at Middlezoy was cast by Davis, and one at Stockland Bristol, by Kingston, in 1827. (Stockland formerly had four bells by Kingston, but three of them have since been recast.) Chedzoy Church tower also has a Bridgwater bell. Another bell founder who traded at Bridgwater was one J. Bailey.

*A thirteenth-century bell.* — Documentary evidence exists showing that late in the thirteenth century a bell was cast in the town. Collections made in the parish, with gifts from others, came to £8 18s. 10d. As Dr. Raven says, *leaden vessels, trivets, pots, brass, and a bason with laver, augmented by a shilling for a ring sold, brought the amount to £10 16s. 1d\*.* The warden of the goods of the Holy Cross advanced twenty shillings. Having collected £14. 3s. 2d. (a very large sum of money, bearing in mind the change in value since then) the authorities purchased 896 lb. of copper, 40 lb. of brass, and 320 lb. of

tin. Many parishioners, unable to subscribe in money, gave of their household gear to add to the metal-heap for the new bell. Thus 180 lb. was received in gifts of pots, platters, basons, lavers, and kettles ; and 425 lb. from one old bell. The items are thus : an old bell, 425 lb. ; metal given, 180 lb. ; tin bought, 320 lb. ; brass bought, 40 lb. ; copper bought, 896 lb. ; total, 1861 lb. weight. Casting the bell absorbed 1781 lb. ; 80 lb. remained over. For repairing the mould and founding the bell the *master* received in part payment of his wages, 40 shillings. This is very strong evidence of vigorous church life in the town before 1300 A. D.

*Bells now in St. Mary's tower*, — Many questions have been made as to these, and for details I am indebted to Mr. A. E. Coles, who is an expert in such matters. The first or treble bell, weighing over 6 cwt., was cast by T. Bailey in 1745. The second, weighing a few pounds more, is of the same date and by the same maker. The third was made in the year 1650, and weighs 8 cwt. 1 qr. The fourth, weighing 10 cwt. 3 qrs. 7 lb., dates from 1615. The fifth bell bears the inscription *SANCTÆ MARIAE ANNO 1634*; it was recast in 1899, and weighs over 11 cwt. Bell No. 6 is marked A. R. (Abram Rudhall) 1721, weighing 12 cwt. 1qr. On it is written *FROM LIGHTNING AND TEMPEST GOOD LORD DELIVER US*. The next or seventh bell is similarly by A. R., in 1721, and weighs 16 cwt. Last comes the eighth or tenor bell, weighing 25 cwt. 1qr. 11lb. It was recast in 1868, and was probably originally made in 1721 by the Rudhall firm. Its inscription is a favourite one for the early eighteenth century, especially by the Rudhalls.

I CALL THE LIVING ; MOURN THE DEAD  
I TELL HOW DAYS AND YEARS ARE FLED  
FOR JOY, FOR GRIEF ; FOR PRAYER AND PRAISE  
MY TUNEFUL VOICE TO HEAVEN I RAISE

Thus the oldest existing bell (No. 4) dates from 1615, nearly three centuries ago. The newest, No. 1 and No. 2, were made in 1745 (excepting the two which have been recast, No. 5 and No. 8). The peal is an excellent one in every way.

*The Swan Inn*. — This famous hostelry was one of the most noted inns of the West Country. It was on the Cornhill, covering the space around and occupying the site of the business premises of Messrs. Thompson Brothers. It is officially mentioned in 1672 and 1682, and it was probably in existence from early in the seventeenth century up to near 1800.

*The Balch family*, — This is a very ancient Somerset family, well represented in Bridgwater by numerous inscriptions on gravestones. John Balch emigrated (probably from Bridgwater) to Maryland in 1658. In 1327 four taxpayers named Balch appear upon a Somerset tax list, e.g. Willielmus Balch of Purye, in the hundred of North Petherton. Robert Balch was mayor in 1689 and 1696; George Balch in 1699 and 1709; Robert Balch in 1777. George Balch was returned member of Parliament for the borough in 1700, 1701, 1702, 1705, and 1708 ; Robert Balch in 1753 and 1754. The John Balch who sailed from the town in 1658 is represented in the direct line of descent to-day by Mr. Thomas Willing Balch of Philadelphia.

*Bridgwater church spire in the storm of 1813*. — On Wednesday, November 17th, 1813, a great thunderstorm occurred, damaging the church and spire. Mr. R. Anstice, on the same evening, wrote an account of the event to Dr. Wollen, the vicar of the town. He says : *About half-past seven in the morning a very violent storm of hail took place, accompanied by a very heavy squall of wind from the N. W., it having blown a strong gale from that quarter during the night. The weather afterwards became dry and moderate at intervals, with occasional storms of rain and hail. At about half-past twelve o'clock some distant noise of thunder was heard, and during the next quarter of an hour the thunder increased, and some flashes of lightning were seen. About this time the weather became extremely dark, and a heavy shower of rain began to fall. I was sitting in the Custom House looking out of the window, and saw on the shute of the house opposite a dash of fire, appearing of nearly a solid consistence, and, breaking on the shute, seemed to spread itself from that point, but particularly in the direction of the shute. A very strong and explosive clap of thunder almost immediately followed. It occurred to me that the spire of the church (from its being of greater elevation than any other surrounding body, and being composed of materials of different conducting powers, ill arranged to convey the lightning harmlessly to the ground) was in danger of having suffered. I went out to examine it, and found the effect had been as I apprehended. A lengthy description, in very full detail, follows the letter, giving an account of the injuries which the church had suffered. They were serious, and made it necessary to have extensive repairs done, which were duly carried into effect in the following year.*

*The Kingsmill monument*, — The Kingsmill family have a fine seventeenth-century monument in the chancel. The inscription is as follows : *Hic jacet corpus Francisci Kingsmill de Ballibeg in comitatu Corke intra regnum Hiberniæ Militis reique militaris scientia præcellentis qui obiit 25 die Julii anno Domini 1620. Per fidem sancti effecti sunt Validi in bello, Heb, xi, 34.*

*Hic jacet corpus Henrici Kingsmill armigeri filii dicti Francisci patris. Qui obiit 22 die Aprilis 1621. Hic etiam jacet corpus Francisci Kingsmill generosi... qui obiit 16 die Augusti anno Domini 1640.*

Sir Francis Kingsmill was born in 1570. He served as an officer in the royal army in the Irish wars at the close of Queen Elizabeth's reign, and was buried in Bridgwater. His eldest son Henry, born at Ballibeg, died at the age of fourteen. Francis, the third son, also died in the town, in 1640, aged twenty-eight. Sir Francis' granddaughter Elizabeth became the wife of Samuel Pepys, who was the author of the famous diary. The monument was probably erected by the second son. Colonel William Kingsmill of Ballibeg, who suffered heavily in the royal cause. In 1620 Sir Francis Kingsmill presented a handsome chalice of beaten silver to the church, which is still in constant use. It bears the inscription : *Calix ecclesiae Bridgwateriensis, Ex dono Francisci Kingsmill, generosi.*



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\* I am indebted to Dr. J. E. Odgers, formerly minister of Dampiet Street Chapel, for many of these notes and items of information

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\* *The Bells of England*, p. 63.