

# A Townsman Browses at Broughton

## Finds a Spirit of Peace with More Tangible Interests

**W**HENEVER I see a valley, lying close and snug like a bird in its nest, between downland slopes, I experience a sweetly sad feeling of homesickness.

Wordsworth tells us that some feelings are too deep for tears, and this nostalgic feeling which the valley arouses is too simple, too elemental for analysis; one can only accept it. Nor is it so strange as it appears to be, for it was in the valleys our fathers first lived, before the age of great towns began. We are all countrymen at heart, and the valley is our home.

It was with such thoughts that I looked down on the village of Broughton, the other afternoon, when great rolling clouds fell away so that the sun might reveal the sheen of the thatches, and give back to the meadows

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and gardens their splendour of colour.

The man who is tired of the city is tired of life, it has been said. If that is true—I doubt it—it is because the city lacks the one essential of contentment: peace. Many city-dwellers who have imagined that life is a very dull affair have recaptured the joy of living in the peace of the countryside. That is why men who have lived busy lives, following their profession, administering the Empire, serving in the Army, come at last to places like Broughton.

Broughton is not a home of legend—like Wherwell, for instance—nor can it boast a romantic past. Yet there is something about it which renews the spirit. Broughton has a secret—it is a village of peace.

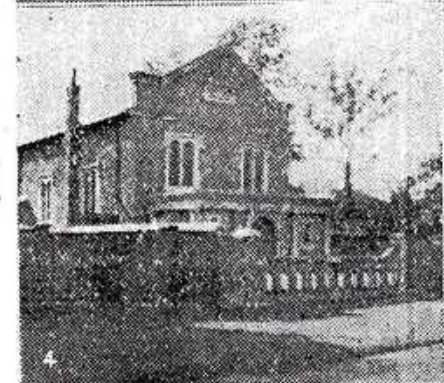
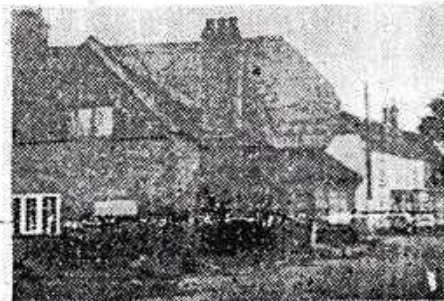
Here, one feels, life would continue with unruffled calm, whatever revolutions and upheavals took place in the outside world.

When I visited the village I was fortunate enough to encounter a resident who loves the place and was willing to point out to a stranger its charms and graces.

There is another tablet in the well-house on which has been inscribed a verse translated by Sir William Jones from an ancient Persian poem. Although eastern in origin, its sentiment is universal. It seems to symbolise the philosophic calm of this corner of the past.

ing for, I learnt, the people of Broughton were first granted the privilege of holding a weekly market in the year 1246. Monday was market day, and once a year, beginning on the Eve of St. Mary Magdalen, a four-days fair was

1—The old Market House. 2 and 3—Good specimens of thatched houses. 4—One of the chapels. 5—The 13th century door of the church. 6—The dove-cote.



the oldest cottage in the village. It was built in the 13th century. Bricks have been used in the original chalk walls of the cottages in Broughton, but the walls are of chalk, taken from the surrounding downs—but the roofs and beams have been replaced in recent centuries, gathering in the old style and beauty with the village itself. The cottages which enclose the village are of chalk, prettily finished in a style which is favourable to the parts.

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the oldest cottage in Broughton. It was built in the Middle Ages. Bricks have been built over the original chalk walls—once all the cottages in Broughton were made of chalk, taken from the neighbouring downs—but the rafters and beams have survived the centuries, gathering mellowness and beauty with the years, like the village itself. The walls which enclose the cottage garden are of chalk, prettily thatched in a style which is favoured in these parts.

Perhaps the first tenant lived when the village was given to the religious men of God's House, Portsmouth, who, in return for the gift, sang Masses for the soul of the Lady of the Manor.

On the opposite side of the lane is a house in which the centuries meet. Its red-brick facade,

On the epistle side of the altar is a 15th century pillar piscina, which some have mistaken for a font. In this the sacred vessels were once washed.

On it there is a strange, grotesque carving—a devil catching a man in a noose. In the Ages of Faith men often treated the devil as a joke, although they believed in him as firmly as any old Scottish divine.

A peculiar feature of Broughton Churchyard is its dove-cote. It was incorporated, evidently when more room was required for burials, and left standing though it does not fit in with headstones very appropriately—in a stranger's discernment, at least. Relic of the days when it was accounted a great privilege to possess—a grant to keep pigeons (almost solely, perhaps, at the expense of other people's crops and chicken food), it may have belonged to the parson, or was an appendage to the Manor House, close by. Pigeons still inhabit it.

Early in the 17th century there was a disastrous fire in Broughton Church. It is still talked about. That was when Matthew Nicholas was Rector. He became Dean of St. Paul's.

The Nonconformist Chapels in Broughton also have a charm which is in keeping with the spirit of the place. The Broughton Baptists have a long history—over the doorway of their Chapel is the date "1655." In 1672 a licence was granted for the use of Henry Abbott's home as "an Anabaptist meeting house." Was there any continuity between the Anabaptists of the 17th Century and the Baptists of to-day?

I followed my guide to his home, another charming cottage where the quaintness of the antique world has been combined with such modern amenities as central heating and a radio receiver.

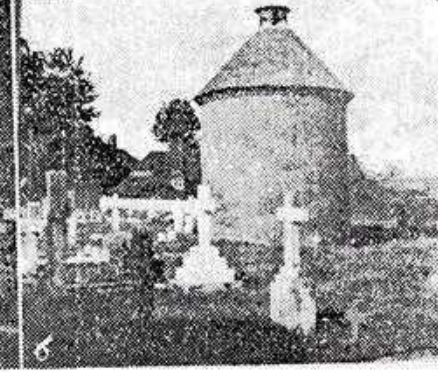
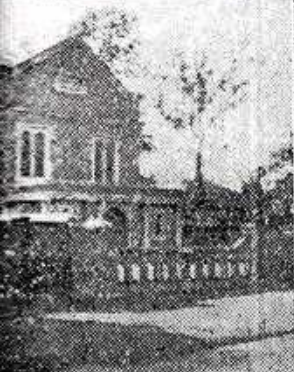
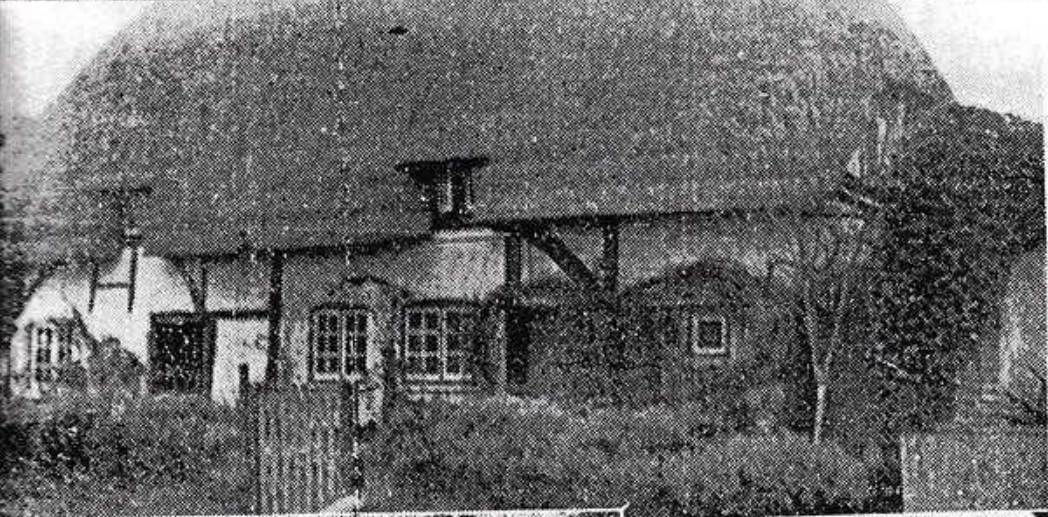
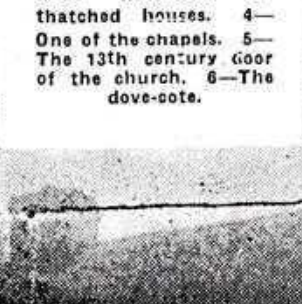
"This woodwork," he remarked, pointing to a nut-brown beam, "is 17th century Spanish oak. Originally part of a sailing vessel, it was probably brought here from Southampton. Much of the woodwork in the village came from old sailing ships."

We talked of village life. "There is a sense of community, of corporate life, in villages such as Broughton which you do not find in the towns," he said. "It is difficult to explain, but one experiences it all the same. Here life seems to be more real. We make our own amusements and we amuse each other, and although you may not believe it, the standard is extraordinarily high. There are artists in the village who sometimes have their pictures hung in the Academy. But they are not professional artists."

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