

BOURNE BRIDGE.

THIS is a border Bridge, partly in the Borough and partly in the County parish of Wherstead. The waters of the Orwell wash under it and form a kind of lagoon to the west. The date at which a Bridge was first erected here is unknown. The earliest mention of one occurs 1352—3 (Edward III.). The Bailiffs of Ipswich, when perambulating the boundaries of the town, rode from the Bull stake, on the Cornhill, to the middle arch of Bourne Bridge.* The allusion to the middle arch shows that at that period the Bridge consisted of an unequal number of arches, and probably this was the Bridge with seven arches which remained till nearly the close of the eighteenth century.

In the closing years of the sixteenth century, and early in the seventeenth century, frequent repairs were made to the Bridge at the cost of the town, according to the requirements laid down by an Act, passed in 1517 (Henry VIII.). Thus in 1554 the Bailiffs and Justices, according to Statute, named Assessors for the "reparacion" of Bourne Bridge, and Collectors were appointed in every parish. In September, 1578 (Queen Elizabeth), the Bridge was ordered to be repaired at an estimated cost of £150. Up to this date the boundary line between the town and the county, and the responsibility for maintenance and repair, do not appear to have been well understood. In 1580, a conference between the town and county magistrates was held on the spot, to inspect the repairs then in progress, when they reported in writing, under their hands and seals, how far the town and how far the county was chargeable, and directed the same to be put on record. The boundary line thus agreed to has ever since been recognised. In the years 1610, 1624, and 1671, and at other periods up to the year 1737, the town repaired its part. In the last-mentioned year it was repaired under a contract, and under the inspection of a Surveyor.

In 1785, advertisements appeared in the *Ipswich Journal*, from Mr. Collett, Clerk of the Peace for the County, and from Mr. T. Notcutt, Deputy Clerk of the Peace for the Borough, notifying that on the 29th day of August the Bridge would be impassable until further notice. Horses and carriages, it was stated, might pass with safety through the river at low water. Mr. Thomas Fulcher, Surveyor, of Ipswich, who was engaged to superintend the repairs, was empowered to put out the brickwork and agree for its performance. On the 18th of the following November another advertisement appeared announcing that the repairs were finished, and that Bourne Bridge would be passable for carriages "on Monday, the 21st instant." In eleven weeks therefore those repairs were completed. The payments made to Mr. Fulcher on the part of the Borough amounted to £85.

The ancient Bridge with its seven pointed arches of unknown antiquity is gone. When did it cease to exist? We found on attempting to collect evidence on this point that the question was more easily asked than answered. The minutes of proceedings at the County Quarter Sessions for the last century, wherein such facts would be recorded, are not, it seems, in existence, and the Borough Records enable us to give only an approximate idea as to the date. It would appear that the repairs to the old Bridge executed under the supervision of Mr. Thomas Fulcher were not of much value. The *Ipswich Journal* for September 9th, 1786, contains a notice to the public showing the hours on each day of the forthcoming week at which carriages could pass through the river at that spot with safety, a proof that the Bridge in less than twelve months after the repairs had again broken down.

Among the Records of the Borough we found that at the Sessions held 15th March, 1790, the following bills were ordered to be paid:—

	£	s.	d.
For Stone and Gravel at Bourne Bridge - - - -	6	5	0
For Paving by Mr. Elliott at Bourne Bridge - - - -	7	16	0
For balance of Messrs. Gowing & Selsby's bill - - - -	199	9	7½
For Messrs. Clinchin's Bill for Stone delivered at the Bridge - - - -	141	18	6

The superiority of the Freemason as a workman is shown by the Statute 6, Henry VIII, c. 5. At the date of the contract named above (1510) the wages allowed under this Statute were:—To a Freemason who can draw his plot, work, and set out accordingly, having charge over others, 8d. per day with meat, 1s. per day without meat, whilst the wages of an ordinary mason having charge over others was 2d. per day less. The amount to be paid to Thomas Reynberd for the repairs was, as per agreement, £27 11s. This sum was paid by instalments. By the first agreement the amount to be paid to John and William Knights was £150, thus: £50 before Michaelmas Day, 1579, £25 at Whitsuntide, 1580, £25 at Michaelmas, 1580, £25 at Whitsuntide, 1581, and £25 at Michaelmas, 1581.

In 1609, Sir Edward Coke, Lord Chief Justice of England, resided at Wherstead. To him the Bailiff and Burgesses granted a lease of the Mills which then existed on the west side of Bourne Bridge "newly built." They have long since disappeared.

At a Great Court, held May 3rd, 1788, permission was given to Dame Susannah Harland, her Heirs or Assigns, "to dig, make, pile, and complete a Dock in and upon the land and soil sometimes overflowed and covered with water by the ebbing and flowing of the tide, upon the edge of the river Orwell, at a distance of not less than eighteen yards from Bourne Bridge, on the east side thereof, of such length, width, depth, size, and dimensions, as she or they shall think proper, and to make a convenient hardway by the side of the said Dock."

The lady to whom this permission was given was the mother of the late Sir Robert Harland, Bart., and resided at Wherstead. She for years prior to this date had a Dock at Bourne Bridge. The old Bridge had suffered considerably through vessels in this Dock drifting from their moorings during a gale, and the Bailiffs and Burgesses made the above-named concession, in order that the Dock might be made at a greater distance from the Bridge, and injuries from similar causes thereby prevented.

A Dock at a distance from the Ipswich Quay existed long before the time of Dame Susannah Harland. In 1605, licence was granted to Robert Gooding, salt finer, to set a post near Bourne Bridge, beneath the full sea mark, about the half flood, in order that he might make a Dock there for the loading and unloading of vessels during the Town's pleasure, he paying the sum of 12d. a year for the privilege.^o Documents at the Record Office show that in 1634 Sir Richard Broke, of Nacton, petitioned Charles I. for authority to construct a Dock at Downham Reach, and his petition was granted.