

## BRANSGORE 1958

TAKE any of the winding roads leading from the east or north of Christchurch and almost immediately you meet up with the simple beauty of the English countryside only two or three miles from the seashore, yet in the midst of the generations old characteristics of country life.

A small thatched cottage appears behind the hedgerow. A farm, then a cluster of cottages and the sight of a church spire peeping over the tree tops confirms you are in one of the many English villages where generations of families have lived and worked.

Bransgore is one of these villages, although nowadays there are only few of the original descendants left.

The majority of the much increased population moved in after the two world wars. Some in search of peace and quiet and others because of work in surrounding districts.

The village is described as a very desirable place in which to live and is considered by members of the medical profession to be very beneficial.

Its history is not known to be long, for no reference to Bransgore is made in any known map until 1750, although Beech House, which stands in the village, was mentioned on previous maps.

### HOW IT GOT ITS NAME.

How Bransgore got its name seems to be a debatable point, but probably the most authentic explanation is that given by the local schoolmaster, Mr. W. H. Bennett, who has spent many years delving into local history.

Brans, he says, is a Saxon word meaning "beech" and gore is the Anglo-Saxon name for "field".

The other theory is that there was a fierce battle fought against the Danes in the district and that it was formerly known as Brainsgore, meaning brains and blood.

A scattered village with several small hamlets within its boundary, Bransgore has no accepted centre. But it was suggested by Mr. Bennett that the area between the church and the Crown Inn corner could be developed as such.

### SCATTERED.

The fact that the village area covered five sq. miles and includes 25 miles of road, not counting lanes, gives some indication of how scattered Bransgore really is. Bockhampton, Neacroft, Godwincroft, Thorney Hill, Waterditch and Holmsley are all hamlets considered within the area of the village.

The church of St. Mary, erected in 1822, is an edifice of brick and stone in the perpendicular style, consisting of an apsidal chancel and nave. Most notable is the font bearing the initials J.D. those of John Draper, who was the last Prior of Christchurch.

Attached to the parish is the beautiful little church of All Saints', built by Lord Manners in memory of a daughter, for the household of Avon Tyrrell and the district of Thorney Hill. Present Vicar of Bransgore is the Rev. W. S. Riley.

Bransgore has many cottages constructed of cob and thatch, and some of these are believed to be about 200 years old.

Responsible for a good deal of the housing development during the last 50 years is 83 year old Mr. W. J. Harper of The Ramblers, Godwincroft. Mr. Harper, a well-known village personality, came to Bransgore when he was three and has lived in his present house for about 60 years. He started in the building trade from "scratch" and entirely on his own, and within four years his craftsmanship earned him work for Lord Manners for a quarter of a century. Since, he has "had the pleasure" of working at practically all of the manor houses in the district.



Mrs. Priscilla Reeks, of The Cottage, Ringwood Road, who, at the age of 90, is one of the oldest Bransgore residents. A native of Dorset, Mrs. Reeks has lived in the village for many years. She is exceptionally active for her age and enjoys life in Bransgore although she "wouldn't mind going back to live in Dorset".

## THE OLD "PURE DROP."

Mr. Harper recalled that his house, built about 100 years ago, was originally intended to replace the old "Pure Drop" public house, which was about 50 yards from The Ramblers." The previous owner and builder of my house built it long enough to allow a skittle alley, an indoor game which was prevalent in those days," said Mr. Harper. "But unfortunately he could not get the licence changed." What of Bransgore today? "It has changed quite a lot," he said. "The bungalows they are building now are so close to one another that a housewife can practically shake hands with the woman next door without moving out of the house." He feels that more room should be allotted to property because land is much easier to obtain in villages than in towns. Transport facilities, he continued, were very good, and he considered an hourly bus service was essential.

## FULFILS PROMISE.

Probably unknown to the rest of the village, Mr. Harper, every Christmas Day morning, fulfils a promise he made to a great friend of his in 1913. In that year, his friend, who was born in Bransgore, wrote and asked him if he would place a wreath on his mother's grave in the local churchyard.

Mr. Harper wrote back saying he would do so at precisely nine o'clock in the morning, and would continue to do so. "I have never failed to place that wreath every Christmas Day morning since that date with my watch in hand each time to make sure I placed it at precisely 9 a.m."

A member of Christchurch Bowling Club for over 20 years, Mr. Harper has been president of the outdoor section three times and president of the indoor twice. He is still able to play and enjoy the game.

It was Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Sargent, of "Trees," Cuckoo Hill, who recalled further interesting facts about old Bransgore. Mrs. Sargent, a member of the local Women's Institute, has lived in the village for 43 years. Mr. Sargent, treasurer of the Bransgore, Thorney Hill and District Social Club since its formation in 1949, was introduced to the village through the game of football.

## TROUBLE.

In his younger days he played for the Bransgore team, but there was trouble ahead at the farm where he worked outside the village when he kept asking for Saturday afternoon off to play football. "My job was threatened so I mentioned it to the club secretary, who was at that time landlord of the Three Tuns Inn. He gave me a job and I came to Bransgore to drive one of the first lorries which came into the district." Mr. Sargent has now his own haulage business.

One of the first taxis in Bransgore, said Mr. Sargent, was run by the late Mr. Arthur Barnes, who previously had a horse and cab.

Brick-making was at one time the village's main industry, and the brickyards were at Burnt House Lane and Chapel Lane. Some of the first houses in Bournemouth were built of Bransgore brick and bricks used for houses at Boscombe have eventually returned to Bransgore after demolition.

Agriculture has provided work for the villagers for many years, but in more recent years market gardens and nurseries have been developed. There is now also a thriving dairy concern.

One nursery with an interesting origin is the MacPenny, owned by Mr. Douglas Lowndes.



It was Saturday morning at the "local" for these darts enthusiasts. Watching Mr. Albert Peters aiming "up in Annie's room" at the Carpenter's Arms, are: l. to r., Mr. Sidney Sherrred, Meyrick Close; Mr. Francis Doe, Westbury Close; Mrs. D. Batley; Mr. Peter Evans, Honeysuckle Cottage, Chisels Lane; Mr. D. Batley, landlord; and Mr. Michael Nolan, The Cottage, Ringwood Road. C.T. Photos

The site was originally a gravel pit and bought by a Major and Mrs. Astley Corbett. Mrs. Astley Corbett cultivated a nursery garden and had in mind to sell flowers at a "penny" a bunch. Her initials were "M.A.C.," and it became known as MacPenny nurseries—now well-known throughout the country.

At the Carpenters' Arms I met 23-year-old Michael Nolan, of The Cottage, Ringwood Road. His mother and grandfather, Mr. Bill Reeks, were "born and bred" in Bransgore, and his grandmother, 90-year-old Mrs. Priscilla Reeks, is one of the oldest residents in the village.

Michael said there was very little entertainment in the village for the younger folk. "We have dances every few weeks but have to go into town for our week-end entertainment."

If he had the chance to live anywhere else, Michael said he would choose the North of England, having served in the Army in Yorkshire, but added: "Bransgore is my home and it would mean leaving everything behind." Landlord of the Carpenters, Mr. Donald Batley, and his wife, are newcomers to the village. They came six months ago from Salisbury and thoroughly enjoy village life.

But Mrs. Batley has one grouse there is no butcher's shop in Bransgore. And this complaint was also expressed by several other housewives with whom I spoke'.

#### HANDICAP.

Although Mrs. E. C. Noyes, of Westbury Close, one of the three Council house estates, complained that two swings and a tiny sandpit in the recreation ground were not sufficient for the children, and that the absence of a butcher's shop was a handicap, she had no other serious grumbles and would not care to live anywhere else.

A well-known figure in Bransgore some years ago was Mr. Bellairs, who was interested in bees and was secretary of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Beekeepers' Association. The story is told that on his death, the bees were told and also informed of the date of the funeral. Believe it or not, but on the day of the funeral a swarm of bees followed the coffin from Chapel Lane to All Saints' Church, Thorney Hill, and settled on a tree by the graveside and also by the church door!

#### SMUGGLERS.

Bransgore is also reported to have been one of the favourite spots for smugglers and a thatched cottage in Poplar Lane, now pulled down, was said to be one of the hiding places for loot.

And the old people will tell of a cottage which is haunted by smugglers who can be seen burying the body of an Excise officer killed during a skirmish, under the hearth in the flickering candle light. I did not stay in the village long enough to witness this scene!

#### VILLAGE BLACKSMITH.

Until recently, Bransgore had a village blacksmith's shop which had been handed down from father to son for many years. The forge was in Ringwood Road and has now been taken over by garage proprietor Mr. Bob Gowing, who still trades under the blacksmith's name of Saunders. An old account book, going back 101 years, has been discovered by Mr. Cowing in the forge.

Mrs. C. L. Warren, of Oakleigh, Ringwood Road, told me more about the blacksmith's shop, for it was her grandfather who started the business. And it was her grandmother who had the first Post Office in Bransgore. Her brother, Mr. E. T. Saunders, one of the recently retired blacksmiths, delivered the first telegram and she believes her mother was the first to ride a pedal cycle in Bransgore.

A well-known bakery in the village is that of Mr. R. W. Dowding, of Bockhampton. The business was started in a small cottage across the road and been in the family for over 50 years. Ask anybody the way through Bransgore today, more often than not the directions will start with "Well, you know Dowding's Corner ...?"

An organisation which will go down in village history as one which helped to foster and encourage social amenities is the Bransgore, Thorney Hill and District Social Club. Its first members volunteered their labour to build the hall in Burnt House Lane. Secretary is Mrs. D. L. Hiscock president, Mr. A. Whitlock, chairman, Mr. A. Dean, and treasurer, Mr. W. J. Sargent. Chairman until last year was Mr. D. Lowndes.

## ENTERTAINMENT.

Mrs. Hiscock said before the club was formed there was no entertainment in the village. Now there are whist drives, dances, outings and a weekly Workers Educational Association meeting, And many charities have benefited through the club's varied activities.

Bransgore was one of the first villages in the area to have telephone communications, and it has its own automatic exchange.

For those who live in the town country life may appear dull. The villagers of Bransgore think not and where entertainment is not provided they make their own.

And according to newcomer Mrs. Batley, of the Carpenters Arms, Bransgore has three good points: "It is within reach of the New Forest, the sea and a good shopping centre."