



AS SAUNTER KENT  
THROUGH KENT  
WITH PEN AND PENCIL.  
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## BOUGHTON MALHERBE

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THE village of Boughton Malherbe is closely mixed up with its own hamlet of Grafty Green, for the two are practically one. There is the church, with its close neighbours in the form of a historic residence, its school and the rectory hidden in a hollow, and then, a mile away, is a cluster of houses, cottages and the post office, general shop and no less than three public-houses in a locality known as Grafty Green. But Boughton Malherbe is the name of the parish, and Grafty Green but a hamlet resting in the heart of it. And it is a very extensive parish, five miles across, and interesting because the old northern boundary of the Weald of Kent passes through it. This accounts for the land on either side of this boundary being known as Boughton-Upland and Boughton-Weald.

A great deal of discussion arises when the pronunciation of the place is mentioned, and even residents of to-day differ in the views. Amongst the younger generation I hear it pronounced as it is spelt, just Malherbe. On the other hand, many of the older people and those who left the place years ago pronounce the final "e," giving it phonetically as Mallerby. It must be remembered that long ago all final "e's" were pronounced in the French style with an accent, and we can safely say that the name of this Kent village was treated in the same way.

Originally it was known as Bocton, and by degrees was merged into Boughton. But then conflict and confusion arose over other places of the same name in Kent, and thus the word Malherbe was added to distinguish it from Boughton Aluph, Boughton-under-Blean and Boughton Monchelsea. The latter name originated with a Kent family, one of whom, Robert de Malherbe, lived in the reign of King



John. It was mentioned in Domesday and later on was possessed of a charter, as its Saxon name proves—"boc" a charter, "ton" a town. I once heard one of those hardened sinners who trace every name to a very practical and unintelligent origin state that the word means "bad herb"!

Within almost a stone's throw of each other are historic buildings of the utmost interest—the church, Boughton Place, the rectory and a yew tree planted by Queen Elizabeth during her visit to Sir Thomas Wotton. This tree stands close to the churchyard, and is jealously guarded by a low brick wall around it. The schools are artistic in design, built of ragstone, and apparently too large for so small a parish, but one of the few voluntary church schools left in Kent. Underground are to be found old foundations, showing that some sort of building stood in the vicinity of the schools.

The church stands nearly on the summit of the Downs, and, roaming about in its vicinity, you obtain the extensive view of the Weald of Kent, stretching as far as Fairlight, above Hastings. When the air is clear the outline of the coast and a glimpse of the Channel of Dymchurch can be seen. Nowhere, however, will you see a church more delightfully situated, for it stands on a mound-like eminence at the corner of a road, and as you turn this corner you see a raised stone footpath with steps leading to an old oak gate and thus through the churchyard to the porch.

The stone walls of the church, tinged with the ambered stain of moss, are guarded by deep green yews, and the old wall which surrounds the churchyard is clad in many places with masses of ivy. Some distance from the road and just beyond the church is the fine old manor house, the squire's residence of long ago, with massively built farm buildings, a long-roofed tithe barn and the cowls of oast houses just seen through the branches of the trees. What a picture! And the quietude of it all. The only break in the silence comes from the school children when they gleefully run out of the playground and spread themselves amongst the many lanes which take them to their homes. The children of Boughton Malherbe are not coddled; no motor-coach collects them from their cottages and brings them to the school, as in so many parts of Kent.

The church of St. Nicholas is mainly of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and built of ragstone, but, unfortunately, during restoration in 1848 much of this material was hidden by some ugly



plastering on the north side. It was during the alterations that a man was killed by a fall from the tower, and his fellow workmen erected a stone to his memory in the churchyard. An old resident tells me that during the restoration certain monuments were taken down and buried under the floor of the old chancel. Are they still hidden?

On the eastern gable of the chancel is a handsomely-carved stone cross of considerable size. Under the square tower is the western doorway with a mutilated benatura at its side. The windows of the tower are surmounted by many prominent labels, but the feature consists of the corbel heads, while in the spandrels are carvings of fruit and foliage. Other corbels with human faces are to be seen in other parts of the exterior, but they are modern.

Another entrance to the church is by way of the porch on the south side—a very spacious porch with two two-light windows and a richly timbered flat roof. Over the gable is a cross made of wood, but uncommonly covered with lead. On the outside of the west wall of the porch is a tablet to the memory of John Bate, who died in 1751, and his wife. The Bate family originated at Boughton Aluph, and the most eminent member was James Bate, who became a great scholar and philosopher during the eighteenth century. He wrote many important works. In the north wall is a blocked doorway which probably led to an anchorite cell years ago.

A glance at the interior gives abundant proof of restoration, and the vestry was a new building erected in the year when other changes were made—1848. There is one aisle with a high pointed open-timbered roof, and this is divided from the nave by two wide arches, the capitals being made of dark Bethersden marble, with unique effect. In the nave roof are king-posts and closely-set rafters. The south chapel is separated from the chancel by an Early English arch. The font has a plain stone octagonal bowl with a tall and elaborately carved cover. It is in and near the chancel that we find some good oak carving. The pulpit is panelled with linenfold work, and the choir benches and desk are also of oak. The choir seats are elaborately carved, representing a ladder, nails, a hammer, a spear, a scourge, a cross, a bunch of herbs, a seamless robe, a cock, a crown of thorns, dice and thirty pieces of silver. The ends of the desks are engraved with clusters of hops, ivy and acorns, while a reversed medallion bearing the letters "S.N.," St. Nicholas being the patron saint of



the church, are painted in blue and white. The low screen in front of the chancel and also the one at the entrance to the chapel are modern. The chancel itself has been altered since early days, for you approach it by five steps from the nave, and the sacrarium is reached by four more steps made of Bethersden marble. How different from the days when the church was built and chancels were on a lower level than the nave floor. On the floor of the latter are some old encaustic tiles in a good state of preservation, and the stone altar is handsome with artistic panelling, the centre one representing a pelican in her piety.

In the chancel is a bust of Sir Thomas Wotton, and between the chancel and chapel is an Eastern sepulchre under decorated arches. On the south side of the altar is a plain sedilia, and on the north side a credence table made out of a slab of polished Bethersden marble on a stone shaft. For many years a tall, black marble pyramidal monument to Henry, Lord Stanhope, who died in 1635, his wife and children, stood at the left side of the altar, but as it obviously spoilt the effect when the new altar was erected, it was removed. The huge pieces of black marble of which it was composed were placed in the floor of the new vestry, and three large lions which lay at its feet were removed to the tower.

The other monument in the church is to be found in a stopped doorway in the north wall of the nave, a coloured memorial tablet with this inscription:—

“NERE THIS LYETH DR. LEONELL SHARPE AN OLD AND CONSTANT PREACHER FOR FORTY YEARS AND VPWARD OF THE FREE SAVEING GRACE OF JESVS CHRIST BY WHICH GRACE HE DIED ASSVRED OF THE PARDON OF HIS SINNES AND OF HIS COHERITAGE WITH CHRIST JESVS. HEE WAS CHAPLAINE FIRST TO THE EARLE OF ESSEX AND AFTER HIS DEATH TO QVEENE ELIZABETH AT HER OWNE CHOYSE, AFTER HER TO PRINCH HENRY AND LASTLY TO KING JAMES; BRIEFLY, HE PREACHED FRVITFVLLY. HEE LIVED CHEAREFULLY, AND HE DIED IOYFULLY THE FIRST DAY OF IANUARY, AO. DNI. 1630.”

Many brasses are to be seen, and several have been placed in the walls. One is to the memory of Nicholas Wotton and his wife, the man being in civilian's dress with three sons behind him, while at



the back of the figure of the woman are four daughters. The date is 1499. Under the date of 1529 is another Wotton brass, the effigy of Sir Edward being bare-headed but clad in armour, while the other figure opposite is that of his wife, Dame Dorothy, and both are holding their hands in prayer. The border of this brass is mutilated. On a plain plate is inscribed the name of Sir James Wotton, dated 1628, and another bears the name of Lady Mary Wotton, widow of Thomas Lord Wotton, with the date 1652. The large brass to this member of the Wotton family is dated 1630. The last brass—a plain plate—is identified with Edmund Sanford, servant and kinsman of Mary, Lady Wotton, “who laid him this tombstone for continuance of his memory, precious as a perfumed ointment.” The date is 1652.

The two coloured windows in the north wall of the nave are in memory of James Douglas Stoddart Douglas, of Chilston Park, who died February 25th, 1875, at the age of 81, being “placed here by his widow”; while the other is in memory of Margaret Douglas, who died in 1858. In an alcove between the windows is an alabaster memorial tablet to the memory of Dr. Leonell Sharpe, “an old and constant preacher for forty years,” who died January 1st, 1630. He was chaplain to the Earl of Essex, Queen Elizabeth, Prince Henry and King James. On the wall close by is the brass in memory of the men “from this parish and church who made the Supreme Sacrifice in the Great War, 1914-1918.” They were John Barton, George Bugden, Walter and Ernest Chacksfield, George Clout, Thomas Dadswell, Charles Farrow, William Harman, John Nichols, Wallace Russell, Edward Smith, Lester Smith, Albert Town and Frank Wickens.

There are memorial tablets on the south wall of the nave to many members of the Best family, of Chilston Park. They record the death of Lieutenant George Best and his wife, who died in 1814; also William, third son of William Baliol Best, third son of George Best, who died in 1822; and of Thomas Best and his wife, Caroline, who died in 1787 and was the third daughter of George Scott, of Scott's Hall; and Cecilia, a daughter of Sir Edward Dering, of Surrenden, George Best and his wife, who died in 1786. The stained glass window is to the memory of Isabella Douglas, wife of Captain C. Douglas, who died in 1860. Mural tablets close by record the deaths of George Best, a Deputy-Lieutenant of Kent, who died in 1818; and Thomas Fairfax Best, a Deputy-Lieutenant of Kent, who died in 1849.