

French baron found peace at Bridge

AN oil painting has come to light in a Paris apartment of the Baron de Montesquieu and with its discovery comes a fascinating insight into the French nobleman and how he came to settle in Bridge, where he died in 1824.

Charles Louis Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, who was born in 1749 and died at Bridge in 1824.

East Kent Diary

— edited by

The painting was discovered in the Paris apartment of the present baron. Born Charles Louis de Secondat, in 1749, the nobleman apparently fought in the American War of Independence and was decorated by George Washington with the Cincinnati Medal.

After the war he returned to France but was so disgusted by the horrors of the French Revolution in 1788 that he fled to England in 1790 and married a woman

of Irish descent, Miss Anne McGeoghegan O'Neill.

He took no part in the Napoleonic Wars and after the Restoration, Louis XVIII appointed him a lieutenant general. But as the Restoration lasted only a short time he returned to Bridge, where he died in 1824.

He was the grandson of a famous French philosopher and lived at Bridge Hill House just off the main road and near the present Highland Court.

He left no immediate family and all his property went to his nephew, whose descendants still live in Chateau Labreade, near Bordeaux.

This isn't the first time the Kentish Gazette has reported on the baron. In July, 1824, we printed the notice of his death.

It read: "Died on Sunday morning, Charles Louis Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, of Bridge Hill

House, in this county and of the Chateau de Labreade, near Bordeaux, South of France. He was formerly a distinguished officer in the French service of an ancient and noble family of Guienne and descendant of the illustrious Montesquieu, one of the greatest ornaments of French literature.

"The Baron settled in this county after the calamitous revolution of France and has been justly revered for his unaffected manners and great hospitality."

The baron's connection with the village has been researched by Mr John Williamson, of Beechmount, Conyngham Lane, Bridge, who has lived in the village for 20 years and become its unofficial historian.

He now corresponds with the family of the present baron, who sent him our photograph of the oil painting.

150 years

Nobleman dies

Died on Sunday morning, Charles Louis Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, of Bridge Hill House, in this county, and of the Chateau de Labreade, near Bourdeaux, South of France.

He was formerly a distinguished officer in the French service, of an ancient and noble family of Guienne, and descendant of the illustrious Montesquieu, one of the greatest ornaments of French Literature. The Baron settled in this county after the calamitous revolution of France, and has been justly revered for his unaffected manners and great hospitality.

(Kentish Gazette, July 19, 1824).

March 28th 1979

Chateau de Villegongrin
36 110 Lezoux
France

Dear Canon Pomy

My husband and I, are most grateful to you, for the remarkable information you gave to M^r Cartwright, who forwarded them to us immediately, about my husband's great-uncle - Charles-Louis de Secondat de Montesquieu, and we wish to thank you most warmly for these precious information. We knew only that he had died in 1824 in England, at Bridge-Hill House, near Canterbury, but nothing else!

Here is a very short "digest" of his life: Baron de Secondat de Montesquieu, was an officer. He took part in the Independence American war, in which he fought very brilliantly. General Washington decorated him, himself, of the Cincinnati Medal.

After the Independence American war he came back to France, but as the French Revolution broke out in 1789, he was so disgusted by the horrors of

Devil's pride of place

Pride of place at a dog show in aid of the Canterbury branch of the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, went to Devil's Coop of Chilstaffe.

The Staffordshire bull terrier, which also won both the sporting and open sections of the pedigree class, earned the Guide Dog Trophy for the best in show.

The dog is owned by Mr and Mrs D. Arendell-Moore, of 1 Chilverton Elm Cottages, Hougham.

Sunday's show at the St Lawrence Cricket Ground was the 10th organised in aid of guide dogs by the Canterbury branch of the British Association of German Shepherd Dogs.

The organisers hope to have raised more than £200 for the association.

Took part

About 200 dogs took part in the four pedigree classes, five open classes and three obedience classes.

Mrs Audrey Castle judged the obedience section, while the others were judged by Mr Joe Mashford, an international championship judge who also judged the first show 10 years ago.

In addition to the main trophy, rosettes were awarded for the first five places in each class.

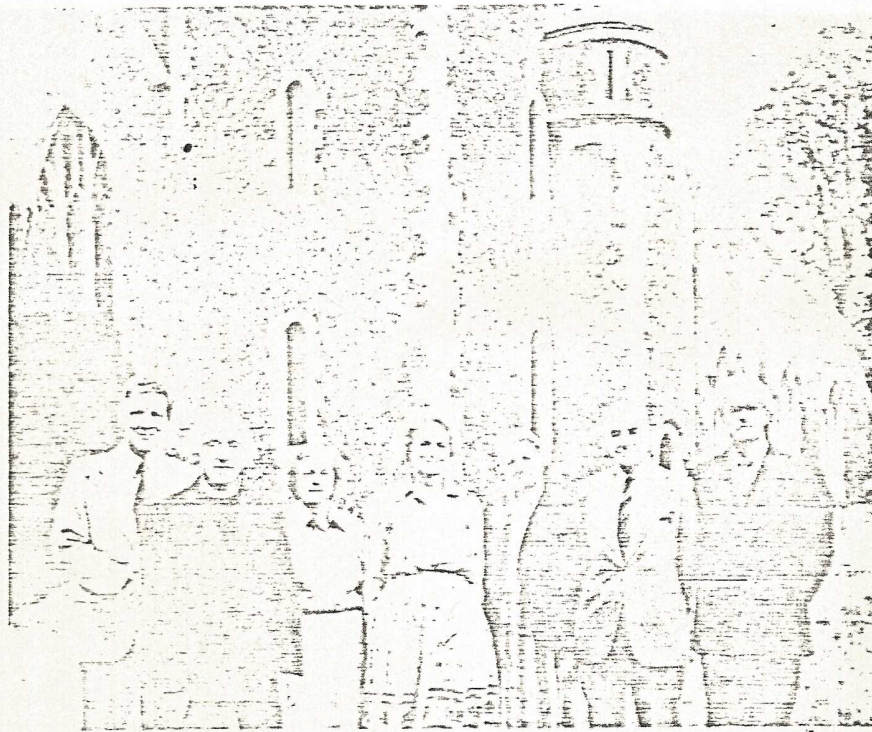
Mr and Mrs Arendell-Moore are hoping to set up a club for owners of Staffordshire bull terriers in East Kent. Anyone interested should write to them or phone Dover 205619.

PHAB

Canterbury's Physically Handicapped Club has reopened after the summer break and meets every Thursday at 7.15 pm at the Long Bridge Leisure Centre, Kingsmead Road.

The leader, Mr Terry Graham, said: "PHAB provides a friendly and informal setting where physically handicapped able bodied may meet and take part and share in a wide programme of events. These have included trips to the theatre, various festivals, games and quiz evenings, discos and club evenings in which our members can meet and talk over coffee. On Thursday, we have a display by Thonet Morris Men."

New members, especially physically handicapped, are welcome and transport to and from the



Baron de Montesquieu (second right) pictured at Bridge after visiting his ancestor's grave on Tuesday with (left to right) villager Mr Alan Jackson, Canon Colin Perry, Mrs Perry, Viscountess Monckton of Brenchley, Baronne de Montesquieu and Mr John Williamson.

Baron's historic visit

Recalling links with the past on Tuesday was Baron de Montesquieu, who travelled from his French home to visit an ancestor's grave at Bridge.

The baron, who lives at Chateau Labreade, near Bordeaux, is a direct descendant of Charles Louis Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, a French nobleman who settled in Bridge and died there in 1824.

The visit was organised by Mr John Williamson, of Eechmunt, Conyngham Lane, Bridge, the village's unofficial historian and who has maintained links with the family.

After visiting the grave, Baron and Baroness de Montesquieu called at Bridge Hill House, the original family home, and then had lunch with Mr and Mrs Williamson before returning to France.

The nobleman, who was born in 1749, came to England in 1790, driven from his home by the horrors of the French Revolution.

After the Restoration, he was appointed a lieutenant general, but he returned to Bridge. He was the grandson of a French philosopher.

Youth on sex charge

A 14-year-old Canterbury youth charged with having unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 13

Students marry

A theology student at Kent University, Mr Ivan Howitt, and a student nurse at Kent and Canterbury Hospital, Miss Valerie Dickinson, were married at St Mary the Virgin Church, Dover.

Mr Howitt is the second son of the Rev and Mrs Leshe Howitt, of Chaplin's House, Princetown, Devon, and Miss Dickinson the eldest daughter of Mr and Mrs N. Dickinson, of 25 Heights Terrace, Dover.

The service was conducted by the bridegroom's father and the organist was Mr Kenneth Best.

Given away by her father, the bride wore a water satin dress with a train and medieval sleeves. Her full-length veil was trimmed with lace and held by a headdress of white flowers. She carried a

keepsake bouquet of blue and white flowers.

The bridesmaids, the Misses Sylvia Dickinson (bride's sister) and Rachel Howitt (bridegroom's sister), wore blue princess-line satin dresses trimmed with white lace. They carried posies of blue and white keepsake flowers and received crystal pendants from the bridegroom.

The page, Graham Howitt (bridegroom's brother), wore a blue satin shirt, bow tie and navy trousers. His gift from the bridegroom was a New Testament.

The best man was Mr Trevor Howitt (bridegroom's brother).

After a reception at Victoria Hall, Dover, the couple left for a honeymoon in Hastings.



26. Rue de l'Yvette
75016 Paris
527 1815

Sunday

DEAR MISTER WILLIAMSON,

I really don't know how to thank you for the very warm reception we had thanks to you in Bourges! This was really a memorable day for my wife and myself not only because of the pilgrimage we were doing but also because of the way the day was organized by yourself.

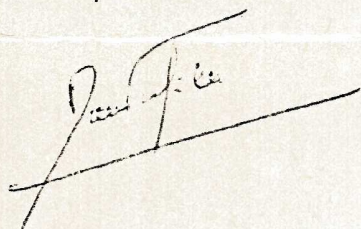
It would have been very difficult for us to find the place in the vault but quite impossible to find Lady's last Manor which we visited with the very kind permission of your friend.

All this in such a family type atmosphere and to dine with your wonderful lunch in your very nice home. Only one shadow we did not see that of your wife but of course this was not our fault and we will have a better chance next time when we will be visiting Bourges again with our boys.

As Announced I am endorsing a post card of
our Family Home at LABRIÈRE in south-west of France
near Bordeaux (10 mi. S.W. of Bordeaux) - this castle is open
to the visitors and we are living on the same estate 310
years from there - (of course CHARLES-Louis married in Bridge
was born and we to leave here.)

As I said earlier I hope to be back with my
Boys to Bridge in a not too far future, but in
the meantime if you visit France please do not fail
to let me know so that we can have the great pleasure
to meet you again.

Thank you again for everything and please
share with your children's wife all the warmest regards
of my wife and myself


Paul F. Lee