



Count and Countess Zborowski in their magnificent garden at Higham.

Zborowski (nicknamed 'Zbo' or 'Lou' by his friends), was an irrepressible ball of fire and extremely generous. Several boys wanted to start a football club. They collected two shillings from residents. They visited Higham and found a mechanic who took their request to the Count. He produced £1, enough to purchase a good football.

He became interested in railways, spending £8,000 on a 15-inch gauge system in the grounds to transport visitors around the estate. Lady guests were tied up on the rails and had to be 'rescued'. He delighted in organising other slightly malicious set-pieces and practical jokes at the expense of people who took life too seriously. One was sent to the swimming pool on an errand while guests watched from indoors. As he stood by the water Louis produced a long-handled dynamo exploder, detonating a home-made depth charge. The water rose in a tall column before descending on the victim.

There is little doubt that unofficial road racing occurred. Guests were invited to select a car, drive somewhere and see who could arrive back first. Frustrated local police tried to catch them as they sped up the hill from Bridge.

In 1920 Louis heard that the local fire officer felt that his elderly horse-drawn appliance was too slow. He offered him a racing chassis and engine and had a suitable body built at Bligh's. This 75 horse-power engine could reach 60 m.p.h. — probably the fastest in the country. The Brigade bestowed on Louis the title Captain which he proudly retained until his death.

He owned an aeroplane at Bekebourne Aerodrome, a motor-boat at Faversham and is believed to have acquired the first wireless in Kent. He could not always buy what he wanted. Mr William Pierce, veterinary-surgeon to the estate, owned a dog called Prince who had retrieved well for the Count. He asked him to name his price but was told Prince was not for sale.

At Brooklands Count Louis met Captain John Howey who shared his railway interests. Louis first had the idea of building a miniature public railway of good length, with double-track, stations, signalling and passengers. Together they planned to buy the Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway in the Lake District but the scheme fell through. The dream was eventually realised by Captain Howey when he established the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway.

Three other Chittys were constructed at Higham. No. 2 was built more as an exciting road car, with narrow four-seater body, mudguards, lighting, hood and windscreen. It was driven across France and after a memorable stay in Nice was taken to Algeria. They drove some 250 miles to the fringe of the Sahara.

Chitty 3, usually known as 'The White Mercedes', was built with a 14.7 litre engine as used in German fighters (obtainable at the time for £60 unused, £30 reconditioned). The fourth Chitty, built in 1924, was the 'Higham Special', with a 27-litre Liberty engine and Bligh two-seater body. The Count seems to have planned an attempt on the Land Speed Record. It was purchased from the estate and modified. Nicknamed 'Babs', it was driven by Parry Thomas, who raised the Land Speed Record to over 170 m.p.h. at Pendine in 1927. He crashed fatally making a further attempt.



A happy house party group at Higham.