

History of "Higham" HIGHLAND COURT

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It took four years to settle the estate after the tragic death of the count in 1924, and it was not until 1928 that the house was bought by Mr. Walter Kennedy Whigham, who after changing the name to Highland Court lived there (except during the years of the second world war) until 1948. It was offered to the regional hospital board in 1951 and new ward blocks attached to the Kent and Canterbury Hospital dealing with gynaecological and ophthalmic patients. It was closed due to financial circumstances and privatisation of all units in 1985 and stood empty until 1972.

In November 1972 it opened its doors once again as a hospital, but this time as a residential home for the mentally handicapped patients to live to their full potential in a happy and friendly atmosphere and it is hoped will continue to do so for many years.

HIGHAM

1) INTRODUCTION

Highland Court Hospital, (formerly named Higham house) is now a residential home for the mentally handicapped, which has a long and varied history. There has been a house on this site for more than for more than five hundred years, but the oldest part of the building now standing in this position was built by Ignatious Geoghagan in 1768.

The Rev. Charles Hughes-Hallett lived in the house for a considerable period and it served as a vicarage to Patricxbourne church. His son and heir, Rev. James Hughes-Hallett continued to live in the house after his father's death, even though his parish was Petham with Waltham. After the death of Rev. James Hughes-Hallett at the age of 84 a London banker with a passion for growing orchids, bought the house, but was regrettably persuaded to sell to the charming Countess Zborowski. The unfortunate countess, after spending a great deal of money converting the house to her own particular tastes, died shortly before the work was completed. Her sixteen year old son, Count Louis Varow Zborowski became the most colourful caricature of all the owners of higham. It was during this time that the famous " Chitty Chitty Bang Bang " car emerged from the garages at Higham.

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HIGHAM

2) THE EARLY DAYS

Research work carried out at County Hall, Maidstone and at the Beany Institute in Canterbury showed that the mansion house called Higham existed in the North-East corner of the parish of Patricbourne during the reign of Edward II (1320) and was owned by a family by the name of De Hegham.

The property changed hands many times during the reign of Henry VIII (1543). Higham was added to the already vast estates of Thomas Culpepper. It was then passed to Anthony Aucher, whose descendent, Sir William Aucher died without issue in 1726. He bequeathed it to his sister Elizabeth who on her marriage entitled her husband Thomas Corbett LL.D. possession of the property. their fourth daughter Antonio married Ignatious Geoghegan who in 1768 built the house which stands today. They lived in the house until 1781 when James Hallett Esq. became the new owner.

3) JAMES HALLETT ESQ.

At the time of the purchase of Higham, James Hallett owned the manor of "Little Dunmow", Essex which carried with it the right to present the traditional "flitch of Bacon". This was a slice of bacon awarded each year to the happiest couple residing within the parish of Dunmow.

A portrait of James Hallett depicts him as a well-fed, well dressed, wealthy Georgian. Portraits of other members of the Hallett family were painted by Gainsborough. "The Morning Walk" which hangs in the National Gallery, and the "Hallett family" painted by the frenchman Francis Hayman, who was Gainsborough's teacher, is part of a private collection. According to the diary written by one of James Hallett's nieces who lived with him, they all lived very graciously in a house filled with the finest china, silver and furniture.

James Hallett's father had been the captain of a ship belonging to the Hon. East India Dock Co. In those days if one survived and was not "lost at sea" it was a very lucrative job, as one of the Captain's perks was to be able to trade in india to one's own accord. To this already very lucrative position he increased his wealth by marrying another ship's captain's daughter. He also

inherited property in Essex and a considerable amount of money.

When James Hallett died in 1823 at the age of 84 he bequeathed Higham to his nephew: his sister having married an Oxfordshire man by the name of Hughes. The property of Higham was left to Charles Hughes on the condition that he added the name of Hallett to his own name by Deed Poll, within a year and a day.

4) THE REV'D CHARLES HUGHES HALLETT

Charles Hughes wasted no time in adding the name Hallett to his own. He had previously been presented with the perpetual curacy of Little Dunmow by his uncle and in 1813 was presented with the chaplancy of Bridge and vicarage of Patixbourne by Edward Taylor of Bifrons. At that time Charles Hughes-Hallett lived Bridge Place, Bourne Park.

The Archdeanery Court Mandate of Induction sequestrations and relaxations of 1729-1869, in Canterbury Cathedral Library show the following entry:

"On receiving a mandate from his Grace the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury bearing the date twenty-fourth day of february 1813, a mandate issued forth from the official General of the Archdeacon Court of Canterbury to all and singular clerks, to instruct the Rev'd Charles Hughes-Hallett, clerk, master of arts to the Vicarage of Patixbourne with the chapel of Bridge, annexed in the Archdeanery of Canterbury late void by the sequestration of William Taylor, the last incumbent there.

To which he was presented by Edward Taylor Esq., of Bifrons in the County of Kent, the true and undoubted patron thereof."

Charles Hughes-Hallett married Frances Anne, the daughter of Sir Edward Knatchbull, 8th bart of Mersham Hatch. Lady Knatchbull was the daughter of John Graham, Lt- Govenor of Georgia at the time of the American War of Independence. During the uprising they lost all their plantations and 227 slaves! Before being involved in a carriage accident which crippled her for the rest of her life, Frances Anne presented her husband with nine children, the eldest of whom followed his father's profession into the church.

The Rev'd Charles Hughes-Hallett died at the age of 68, on the 10th of May

1846 , and was buried beside his wife who had died the previous year on the 14th of March at the age of 54. He had held the vicarage of Patricbourne for 33 years.

Higham then passed to the eldest son Rev'd James Hughes-Hallett.

5) THE REV'D JAMES HUGHES-HALLETT

James had been born in 1807 and was the eldest of nine children, several of whom died in their early twenties in various parts of the world. He married the daughter of Gen. Sir Thomas Gage Montresor of Ospringe; she had been "born on the march" in India during the war with the Mahratras.

On the death of his uncle, Graham Hughes-Hallett, the Rev'd James was inducted as Vicar of Petham with Waltham on November 13th 1837, by his brother-in-law, Sir John Honeywood. The Archbishop made him live at Petham for half the year, where he built a house to act as a vicarage. Portraits of Rev'd James Hughes-Hallett and his wife were painted by the french artist Sanges and were exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1854.

at that time the Higham estate was very prosperous, in particular the breeding of Highland cattle and pigs. All the water required for the house was drawn from a well, by a donkey wheel and a special herd was kept at the farm for this purpose.

During the periods when James was resident at Higham he would ride or drive his trap to Petham for the Sunday services, stopping over for lunch with friends so that he could take the evening prayers.

The Hughes-Halletts of Higham seemed to be of very strong stock. James remained Master of the hunt until at the age of 84 a sudden riding accident while hacking home at dusk, called a halt to his equestrian activities. His sister sold his horses whilst he was recovering from the fall. The family strength and will-power is further illustrated by an account from Lt-Col. N.V. Hughes-Hallett, of Cheltenham, and grandson of James Hughes-Hallett, that one of James' sisters emigrated from higham to Australia at the age of 93 to go and live with an elder sister.

The Rev'd James Hughes-Hallett died 3rd November 1901 at the age of 96.

higham was bequeathed to Col J.W. Hughes-Hallett C.B.,C.V.O.,D.S.O., of the Seaforth Highlanders. He had no son and was domiciled in Scotland so Higham was put up for "SALE".

6) THE DAYS OF WILLIAM GAY

Higham was bought by William Gay, a retired London banker with Lloyds , who was married with two sons and two daughters. Apart from farming the estate he took a very keen interest in the adjacent grounds to higham and indulged in his favourite pastime of growing orchids. During this period the walled garden was constructed and many types of fruit were grown, including Grapes and figs. A qualified team of gardeners were employed and no expense spared.

Mrs. L.M. Crookenden, widow of the late Col. Crookenden of Barham, and only surviving child of William Gay, recalls her childhood at Higham as being happy but very much according to victorian etiquette which still lingered on.

Her father owned a much prized herd of pedigree Highland cattle which roamed the estate, and she recalls one occasion when "Hopkins" the bailiff was taking a white bull to be slaughtered, at the local butchers, the bull had other ideas and tossed the bailiff over the Church wall before making off down the village High Street, causing a great fluster amongst the villagers.

Mrs. Crookenden's mother was of french ancestry and this had some influence on the decor and furnishings of the house. She enjoyed entertaining and had a wide circle of influential friends; one of these being Countess Zborowski who lived opposite in Bridge Hill House. As a girl Mrs. Crookenden remembers being taken for tea with the charming Countess and instantly disliking a pale-looking boy called Louis. Also always in the background was the formidable Miss Hodges, the Countess' companion.

It was the friendship between the Countess and Mrs Gay that was to lead to Higham being sold once again. The Countess had set her heart on buying the property from the Gay family and any objections raised were soon overcome by the Countess' charm.

Mrs. Crookenden still has in her possession a dolls house, originally made for the Hallett family as an exact replica of higham, which must be over 150 years old.

7) COUNTESS ZBOROWSKI AND YOUNG LOUIS VAROW

When Margaret- Countess Zborowski first came to Bridge she set her heart on buying Higham and used all her charm to persuade the Gay family to sell the property. When the purchase was complete she set down plans for the whole house to be transformed. Unfortunately she never lived to see her dreams come true, as she died of influenza just before the work on the house was completed.

Margaret was the wealthy granddaughter of William Astor and shortly after her marriage to Baron Alphonse de Steurs had ended in divorce, she married Count Elliott Zborowski. He was of Polish/American ancestry and had inherited much capital from his father who had been one of the early settlers in the Eastern United States and had extensive property in New York and New Jersey.

To say that Count Elliott Zborowski was somewhat of a character would be an understatement. Tradition demanded that no self respecting Zborowski ever died with his bedsocks on. Elliott lived up to this tradition with full varve and vigour. His penchant was for abandoned horse riding, polo playing and general zest for living gave credence to the tales that after an evening's drinking he rode his stallion up the main staircase at Coventry House, Melton Mowbray. Needless to say good manners prevented him taking the horse further than the bedroom door.

Into this warm fun loving high society Louis Varow Zborowski was born on the 20th of February 1895. The boy grew up with many friends, two of whom were Lord Limerick's children, Viscount Glentworth and Lady Victoria. The children spending many happy holidays together at Dramore Castle in Ireland.

Louis listened with interest to his father's account of his apparent casual participation in the Great Paris to Victoria motor race in June 1902, and which he would have won but for a french adjudicator's decision against him. Cars now completely filled the count's life. The stables at Melton Mowbray were closed and the horses sold. From now on the Count's attention was completely captivated by the large noisy monsters which had been described by the victorians as being an outrage to all decent living beings.

The carefree world to which young Louis became accustomed was shattered when he was eight years old when his mother returned from Nice with the news

that his father had been killed in an automobile accident on the Grand Carniche Road. It was believed that his gold cuff-links had caught in the throttle lever on the steering column; throwing the Count into the roadside where he sustained a fractured skull. Louis felt very deeply the loss of his father and when he returned from the funeral at Burton Lazars the prospect of growing up under the care of two women - his mother and her companion, Miss Beatrice Hodges, did not bear thinking about.

After his father died, the house at Melton Mowbray was sold, the Countess, Louis and Miss Hodges moved to London. The Countess' health suffered with the London air and so they moved to Bridge Hill House, Bridge. The adjacent estate of Higham immediately attracted the attention of Margaret Laura Zborowski and she was determined to persuade the Gay family to sell her the property. The Countess achieved her ambition in buying the house, but sadly just before the finishing touches to her "dream house" were completed, she died of influenza.

Once again Louis made the journey to Burton Lazars cemetery where the Countess was laid beside her husband. The young Count Louis was just sixteen when he moved to Higham with Miss Hodges and the rest of the household.

8) COUNT LOUIS VAROW ZBOROWSKI

At the age of sixteen Count Louis Zborowski moved into the Higham estate. He was extremely wealthy, His father left him eight million pounds and his mother three million pounds.

He attended Kings School, Canterbury, where it is not actually recorded that he was expelled by all accounts though they were not sorry he left. Louis had a flair for languages, an inborn mechanical ability and an appreciable artistic talent, the latter being suppressed by his tutors as being considered effeminate. Tutors came and went. He spent a term at Eton and tried university life, but all failed. He was a natural intellect but his eccentric personality eventually became the downfall of all attempts of classical forms of education.

The young count turned to cars for solace. The cars on the estate discouraged spirited driving due to the heavy body work, so with the aid of some of his friends he transformed one of these by fitting a sporting light-weight coach

work. A local firm of Bligh Bros. was co-opted into helping and also professional advice was sought at the Weighbridge Coach works of Gordon Watney.

At this stage the counts interest in machinery was not limited to cars alone. He developed a keen passion for aeroplanes as engines and had an aeroplane hanger at nearby Bekesbourne aerodrome. Actual flying had little if any appeal. It is recorded that he remarked to his friends C.G. Le Champion "I find flying utterly boring", and so aeroplanes were left rigged and flown by his employees. Also moored at Faversham Creek was a boat fitted with a Mercedes engine, but again interest dwindled quickly. Motorcycles were purchased from local Canterbury shops and ridden with gay abandon through the estate and surrounding countryside, raising many a scornful eye from villagers.

One of his companions at this time was T.H. Lawrence, later Lawrence of Arabia. Another was his friend from Kings School days, the ex-Sandhurst Cadet, Clive Gallop who was to become a permanent part of the Higham scene for a number of years.

As his personality developed so did his love of practical jokes, and bizarre ideas. It was not unknown for him to booby trap the rose garden with small explosive devices in order to catch unexpected visitors admiring the gardeners handiwork. This was much to the horror of Ted Mansell, the head gardener. It was also commonplace for him to use the garden statues for target practice or the front courtyard as a firing range.

The now famous Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Light Railway had its beginning at Higham. The original narrow gauge track being salvaged from Jackson's scrapyard in Golden Square, Canterbury, and laid at Higham. A beautifully built locomotive designed by Sir Nigel Bresley and named "The Green Goddess" hauled house guests and shooting parties around the estate. When the estate was sold after the Count's death the railway was bought by Captain Howie and Lee Guinness and laid in its present position. "The Green Goddess" is still a major item of the present day rolling stock.

Louis was also an early exponent of "mad" movies, trains featuring in many of them. He would tie one of his main lady friends to the railway line and with the assistance of his friend the chief engineer, Len Martin would arrange a dramatic rescue in true gallant manner just as the train was approaching. The whole

episode being captured on film to be shown later at one of the many parties. Len Martin recalls one incident when a specially constructed building was set on fire with the intention of Louis galloping through the inferno complete with en femme. on this occasion the stunt almost failed and they escaped with a very narrow margin of safety. Unfortunately all the films were destroyed after the Count's death in 1924, apparently his widow did not wish to be reminded of these escapades.

At the start of the 1914-1918 war Louis volunteered his services, but much to his disappointment was refused admission to the armed forces. The direct reason was never revealed, but it may have been something to do with his Polish ancestry - Zborowski not sounding quite right for an army officer. However not to be excluded completely, he worked on the "home front" by turning over the coach works, of which he was a director to the manufacture of artillery wheels. Many acres of pasture land also came under the plough in an effort to produce more food crops. Another of the Count's "war efforts" was to fit a search light to one of his high-powered cars, ostensibly to watch the Dover Road for enemy infiltrators, but enjoying every minute of the fast night driving.

In keeping with his playboy image, and the family tradition, a high society social life developed at Higham. Many pretty girls from the theatre attended Higham champagne parties; one of whom was Phyllis Monkman, the star of the "Bing Boys".

Louis eventually married an American show girl, Violet Ethel Leicester and she became Countess Zborowski in 1919, honeymooning on the Thames at Wallingford. For the first Christmas at Higham as Count and Countess, the housekeeper, Mrs. Dixon was requested to draw up a list of all the servants' and estate workers' families. A grand christmas ball was arranged with bands coming down from London, and the very best food and wine. It was a great success and so became an annual event until 1923.

These events are still recalled by some elderly local villagers and while talking to some of them another facet of the Count's character became apparent. evidently at the last of these grand balls he raised his champagne glass to toast the estate workers as his glass clinked it shattered which the Count took to be an ill omen. He immediately retreated to his bedroom and did not speak to anyone for a week. The following year he was tragically killed.

The Count's generosity is recalled in an article written by David A. Paine, which appeared in Veteran and Vintage Magazine in December 1969. In 1920 the Count, on hearing the laments of the local fire officer about his aged horse drawn appliance being too slow to reach the outlying village fires in time to be of any use, offered the brigade a Pilian racing chassis complete with engine and Dion rear suspension. His coach builders were commissioned to build a suitable body to comfortably accommodate ten men and a mile of hose. This superb 75 h.p. engine could develop speeds of 60 m.p.h., and could also haul a steam pump if necessary and was probably the fastest engine of its type in the country.

What other village could boast such equipment? In recognition of his generosity the fire brigade bestowed upon the Count the honorary title of Captain of the Brigade which he proudly retained until his death. His generosity was appreciated and known by all, but at one time his debts had accumulated to such an extent that Higham was mortgaged for £10,000.

Although a millionaire, money could not always obtain what the count wanted. William James Pierce who lived in London Road, Canterbury was veterinary surgeon to the Zborowski estate and had taught the count to shoot as a young lad. After one particularly well retrieving for the count, he asked him to name his price for the dog, but was told that it wasn't for sale.

It was with shocked dismay that the estate workers heard of the death of the count. He had died tragically from a fractured skull sustained while racing at Monza. His body was bought back to Dover, then to Higham and finally to its resting place with his parents of Burton Lazars, to the tune of his favourite hymn (lead kindly light.) He died on October 19th, 1924 at the age of 29.

It was the end of an era the like of which Higham was never to see again.

9) THE CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANGS.

Probably the most famous car of all time was first envisaged and built at Higham. Louis Zborowski's love of large, fast engines led him to design and build the now legendary Chitty Chitty Bang Bang. Immortalised by Ian Fleming in a book of the same name, but bearing little resemblance to the original car, written when living in the nearby village of Bekesbourne.

At the end of the first world war the Aircraft Disposal Co. advertised 30,000 surplus aero-engines for sale at Wadden Airport (later Croydon Airport). One of these was a six cylinder, 23,093 c.c. Mayback engine capable of developing just over 300 h.p.

This enormous engine was coaxed into a specially lengthened Mercedes chassis. In order to retain all the Mercedes characteristics so loved by the count the radiator and scroll clutch were retained. In fashion with the times the car was given a painted prow for good air penetration, in spite of the enormous drag of the big radiator and primitive body work. Chitty was the nature of an experiment and was first given a crude four seater body which was knocked up by Bligh Bros. of Canterbury; a firm with whom the count had financial interests and under whose trade plates Chitty was first driven.

In 1921 Easter event at Brooklands race track saw Chitty make her debut, causing an immediate sensation. Zborowski and his group of engineering friends clad in loud checked palm beach caps, started his monstrous car with the aid of half axle from an aeroplane, compression device and someone furiously winding the starting magnets was a sight no Brooklands inhabitant cared to miss.

Zborowski was cautious. He knew that much would be expected of his 23 litre home - built car and that if it failed as a racing car he would become a laughing stock. He did not expect the handicaps to treat him lightly. As handling had previously proved difficult at speed 7 c.w.t. of sand was placed at the back of the body in order to keep the wheels in contact with the ground throughout the race.

Chitty was awarded 78 seconds from the nearest rival, a frenchman, Andre Boillet in a Sunbeam. On the second lap chitty increased her lead, lapping at 108.15 m.p.h. This was Chitty's first victory. The bookies took 6 to 4 on Zborowski, 4 to 1 on the field. Chitty won two further events that day and came second behind the counts 4.5 litre Mercedes driven by a friend. No easter egg would have matched the sweet success that monday.

Flushed with a feeling of success the Count returned to Higham. The car behaved well and deserved further development and refinement. The Zenith carburettors were replaced with three Claudel - Hobsons, each with its own

branch manifold and outside pipe. Moreover the "touring" body was removed and guards were fitted above the exterior driving chains. All was completed for the Whitsun race meeting at Brooklands.

With a ten second start in the lightening short handicap, Chitty won easily lapping at 111.29 m.p.h. and averaging 102.6 m.p.h. a re-handicap for the next race proved to much for this magnificent machine, inspite of a lap speed of 113 m.p.h. and approaching 123 m.p.h. down the straight. A cowl had been fitted over the radiator but this fell off; the petrol tank also split as the flexible chassis rode the Brooklands bumps, necessitating chitty's withdrawal from any further events that day.

the combination of Zbarowski's temperament and Chitty's construction was bound to lead to eventual success, but this was not to be in 1921 Brooklands summer meeting. Hatford shock absorbers were fitted to Chitty to keep the back wheels down, but this only gave the car a curious lolloping appearance as she went round the track. In the lightening short handicap Chitty achieved second place to Swain's G.P. Vauxhall, but was handicapped completely out of the lightening hang race. Although winning appealed to Zborowski's flamboyant nature he judged Chitty not so much by her track performance but by the fact that he greatly enjoyed driving this magnificent car on the near deserted roads of Kent.

By late summer of 1921 an improved version known as Chitty II was nearing completion in the Higham workshops. Chitty II followed the same general lines as Chitty I but with a shorter wheel case. Using the same type of pre-war (probably 1907) Mercedes chain driven chassis, an 18.882 c.c. Benz aeroplane was fitted. This car had been conceived rather as an exciting road car than for the track.

Having missed appearing at the august Brooklands meeting , although Chitty II had been included in the programme, Zborowski decided to enter both cars in the autumn meeting. Unfortunately good fortune eluded them. The smaller car proved under geared for the track and had too severe a handicap to overcome having to give Major Seagrave's 3 litre Sunbeam 8 seconds start in the 100 m.p.h. short handicap and 12 seconds in the 8.5 mile version of the race. This was Chitty II's only appearance as a track car. It managed to lap at 108.27 m.p.h. but was never raced at Brooklands again. Nevertheless Zbarowski had every reason to be pleased with his first excursion into the

realms of fantastic motor cars. The Count's were here to stay.

During 1922 Zborowski drove Chitty II across France to Algeria followed by a white Mercedes to carry the luggage. Following a stay at Nergresco Hotel, Nice, Zborowski and his party drove some 250 miles south of Biskra on the fringe of the Sahara desert where a close call to disaster was only just averted. Chitty's radiator boiled dry just as the parties water supply was at it's lowest level.

Before returning to England Zborowski and his companion major Clive Gallop drove up to Strasbourg in order to view the Grand Prix circuit where the French Grand Prix would be run later that year, both having entered cars for this event.

The Count had previously imported from Germany a 28/95 Mercedes chassis equipped with a sketchy test body, a six cylinder overhead camshaft engine, a direct third gear in it's four gear box sped and a somewhat rudimentary four-wheeled breaking system. This was to be the basis of Chitty III but always known as the "White Mercedes". The original 7 litre engine removed (and eventually found its way into a boat). The chassis was lengthened and a six cylinder 14,778 c.c. Mercedes aeroengine fitted. At which time engines of this nature could be easily obtained for as little as £30. westinghouse were approached for a new breaking system, and with a complete new body, Chitty III became a comparatively modern shaft driven car, if still somewhat large for the year 1923.

During 1922 a scarcity of tyres made it essential to limit track events for Chitty type cars. However Chitty I entered and won the Southsea speed trials at an average speed of 73.10 m.p.h. In September 1922 Zborowski had intended to resume racing at the Brooklands track. Unfortunately disaster struck during a fast practice lap when an offside front tyre burst, while climbing the members banking , turning round as she did so, went backwards through the timing hut at the beginning of the mile, tore off her front axle and came to rest upright a considerable distance away. The riding mechanic then Martin, was thrown out and badly shaken. Zborowski stayed in his seat and escaped serious injury. One official Chamberlain had three fingers amputated as Chitty smashed through the timing box. (The poor unfortunate fellow was later killed in a similar accident but involving motor bikes.) Another official, Cann, saw the car go out of control and slipped into a ditch, Chitty passing over his head without doing him any harm. That was Chitty I's last appearance Brooklands

By 1924 Zborowski had become a team driver for Mercedes and all his visits to Unterturkheim were made in Chitty III. Chitty III was entered as a "Mercedes" in the Brooklands Whitsun meeting of 1924 in the private competitors handicap, indicative of the fact that Zborowski's skill remained. He lapped at 93.62 m.p.h. but was unplaced. However this proved to be merely a "warming up" for the short handicap gold vase event when Chitty lapped the track at 104.63 m.p.h. and won by 0.25 miles. At the summer Brooklands meeting Chitty was bought out again for the short handicap and lightening hang handicap, to be pipped to the post in events by Parry Thomas in a Leyland-Thomas special, breaking all Brooklands speed records. This sadly was to be Zborowski's last appearance at Brooklands.

Back at Higham two other cars were under construction. One was never completed, but the other was notorious and known as the "Higham Special". A primitive chassis frame carried a war time Liberty V12 aeroengine and was the biggest power unit ever to race at Brooklands. The 27 litre engine was matched with a gear box from 200 h.p. Benz with chain drive and stub axles of a 1908 Grand Prix Mercedes, finished with a two-seater body. It had a brief but sensational career. After the death of Count Zborowski it was bought by Parry Thomas for £125 who renamed it "babs". In April 1926 he made a bid for the land speed record on the flats at Pendine, South Wales. All was going well and he had already beaten Seagrave's previous record by 20 m.p.h. by notching up 171.02 m.p.h. on the previous run, when on a last attempt to improve upon this speed the chain snapped lashing up and killing the driver instantly.

The car was interred in the sand under the golf course at Pendine, where it remained until 1969 when Professor O. Wyn Owen exhumed the car and completely restored it. In 1976 "babs" was again driven over the flat sand at Pendine at a somewhat leisurely pace, to mark the fifteenth anniversary of Parry Thomas' record attempt.

Only one Chitty still remains in existence, this is Chitty II. After Zborowski's death it was thought to have been bought by a Mr. A. Fowler for £825, but later became part of the stock of David Scott-Mancriff who had commenced selling horseless carriages to the nobility and gentry of the late twenties. Mr. William Earl Hollis of Dover bought Chitty hibernated in the corner of a farmyard for more than twenty years.

A young lad of 17, while collecting chickens from the farm for the family butchers shop in Deal, took an interest in the old wrecked car. Hollis told him that if he could get the car towed away he could have it. Completely unaware of the car's historical past and her previous owner he began a task which was to take every spare moment of his life for the next ten years and cost him thousands of pounds. The meticulous restoration of Chitty Chitty Bang Bang II had begun. Peter Harris Mayers is a quiet sensitive man with a unique devotion to the restoration of beautiful cars. Chitty II was in his possession for 25 years. During this time the car made several appearances in various showrooms as a centre piece, appeared on T.V. and helped raise money for the children at Guy's Hospital. It was only due to the financial burden of the two tonne monster that forced Mr. Harris Mayers to decide to sell her in 1968. The road tax at this time, based on the cubic capacity of the engine, was £35 per quarter year, plus the fact that 11 m.p.g was the best fuel consumption ever obtained.

She was put up for sale and bought for £16,500 by an american, Mr. M. Rinstrick of Edendale, New York. Unfortunately when the sale was announced in the press a controversy arose over rightful ownership and Chitty spent the next year in a packing case awaiting shipment to the States.

Mr. Hollis (on whose farm Chitty had been allowed to rot) declared that he had never officially given the car to Peter Harris Mayers and that it should not have been sold without his permission. According to add to his collection at Beaulieu and offered Mr. Hollis £4,000 for the car if he won legal ownership, he also made the plea that the car should not leave Britain. At the end of a three day hearing in a London High Court, Peter Harris Mayers won the day and soon after Chitty at last began her journey to the States. She has since changed ownership and is part of a private collection.

The name Chitty Chitty Bang Bang still lives on, originally taken, not as we were lead to believe in the film produced by Chubby Broccoli, and starring Dick Van Dyke, as the noise made by the exhaust, but from the somewhat lewd music hall song of the period, the words of which like the singer have long since be forgotten. The legendary Chitty Chitty Bang Bang and her young millionaire creator belong to a distant age, the like of which we will never see again.

10) FROM HIGHAM TO HIGHLAND COURT.

After Count Zborowski's death a sudden quiet fell over the estate and once more cattle grazed in the parkland undisturbed by the monstrous cars travelling at high speed up the driveway.

During the four years in which it took the Count's estate administrator, George Gosling Plant to finalise the sale of Higham it was leased to a dairy farmer from Denton, Albert William Goldup, for £150 rent per annum.

Finally on Tuesday, 31st July 1928, Higham was put up for sale at the London Auction Mart, Victoria Street, London by John D Wood & Co. It was described in the brochure as " The well known and most attractive residential and sparkling property of Higham , a fine classic mansion in a finely park".

The house , parkland and home farmland were brought by Walter Kennedy Whigham of the Highland Investment Co Ltd., of Crosby Square, London for the sum of £17,500 on the 31st July 1928.

After moving in with his new bride a french countess from the Saliganic Feelon family, he changed the name of the house to Highland Court. They did not wish to be dubbed the "Whigham form Higham" and Though Highland Court more appropriate.

Walter Whigham and his wife had four sons, Walter Jr. Francis, Geoffrey (who died at the age of eight) and Bernard. Mr Bernard Whigham recalls that the cellars were used as playrooms and a Hornby Railway set laid out. So that the children could play without disturbing the rest of the household. Private tutors were employed for the children (the room that now serves as the dining room for the residents was the school room). At Christmas large parties were held and all the children from the village visited the house.

Highland Court mansion and its adjoining farm provided many jobs for the local villagers. Many of the estate workers from Zborowski's time had remained, one in particular who returned to act as chauffeur to Walter Whigham was Len Martin who had been Zborowski's riding mechanic. Many of the village girls started as housemaids at the mansion house and married estate workers or gardeners.

The Highland Court Investment Co Ltd., expanded the farm and in 1930 new farm buildings and a new dairy were built. Also built about this time were new stables introduced adjacent to the house. Mr Bernard Whigham also said that grapes were grown on a fairly large scale for wine making, unfortunately all attempts at wine culture in latter years have always been foiled by pheasants eating the fruit before maturation.

Mr Whigham became a well known and respected member of Kentish Society. He was twice Sheriff of Kent but his main patronage was the Hospital Management Committee for 13 years and was host to Princess Marina when she visited Canterbury in 1935 to lay the foundation stone of the new Kent & Canterbury Hospital. In recognition of this work of his a ward in the new hospital was named after him 'Whigham Ward'.

In 1936 a Cricket ground was added adjacent to the grounds at the back of the house. (later in the mid-fifties a pseudo Tudor pavilion was added and Highland Court Cricket Club had many fixtures there during the season. Many ex-Kent players number among the regular members of the team.

Early in 1940 Mrs Whigham died, but the family had already moved to a smaller house in Bekesbourne where Mr Whigham continued to live for the duration of the war.

During the war years Highland Court mansion was taken over by the War Department and was Brigade Headquarters for the London Scottish Regiment. it is believed that when Field Marshall Montgomery visited the house shortly before D-Day he was recorded as having remarked on the luxuriant quarters.

Mr Whigham remarried in 1943, and a further son David and Daughter Cyntheia were born. After the war ended they returned to Higham for a short period until Mr Whigham death in 1948 when the house was offered to the Regional Hospital Board as an annexe to Kent & Canterbury.

In the early sixties when Highland Court Investment Co Ltd., were again expanding the farm it necessitated demolishing the old farmhouse estate. A large well was discovered and it is believed that this may have been the original well worked by donkeys to provide water for the whole estate.

After the opening ceremony bouquets were presented to the ladies, and all

11. From Private House to Hospital Annexe.

In 1948 when Mr Walter Whigham, President of the Kent & Canterbury Hospital Management Committee for 13 years died, Highland Court was offered to the Regional Hospital Board as an addition to Kent & Canterbury Hospital. The project was then submitted to the authorities and there followed protracted negotiations through the District Valuer, but the Hospital Management Committee were determined that as far as possible they would obtain Highland Court. They had the support of the Chairman of the Regional Board as a result the building was finally acquired.

The plans for its adaption to a hospital were drawn up by Mr Cecil Burns and Mr Bland who had been responsible for the plans of the main hospital in Canterbury. The actual cost of acquisition and adaption was estimated to be approximately £ 47,000 or £ 1000 per bed, including all equipment. It was not possible to adapt the whole house at once and it was therefore planned to carry out the work in two stages. Each stage provided twenty to twenty five beds for gynaecological and ophthalmic patients.

On Thursday, October 18th, 1951 Highland Court was formally opened by Mr K.L.Julian C.B.E. Chairman of the South Eastern Metropolitan Regional Board, Mr E.J. Mount, Chairman of the Hospital Management Committee presided at the ceremony which included a blessing and dedication to its new use by the Hospital Management Committee's Chairman now Rev R.A.F.Pratt. Hospital nurses formed a guard of honour to welcome the many guests including the mayor and mayoress of Canterbury, Councillor and Mrs S.H. Jennings, The Sheriff and Mrs J.H. Barrett and Mr Walter Whigham Jnr, son of the late owner together with many VIP's from the medical profession.

In his welcoming speech Mr Mount spoke of the late former owner of Highland Court and of his valuable service to the hospital. He said that there was possibly no use to which Highland Court could have been put that would have pleased Mr Whigham more than its becoming part of the Kent & Canterbury Hospital. The opening of this annexe, with its well equipped and upto date operating theatre would go far in helping to relieve the congestion at the Canterbury Hospital.

After the opening ceremony bouquets were presented to the ladies, and all

guests were taken on a tour of the hospital where they admired the wards and spoke to the first four patients. All the visitors were very impressed with the Oak ward which in previous years had been the ballroom and echoed to the strains of waltzes and the chink of champagne glasses. From this room one appreciates the sunken garden with its panoramic views of Canterbury beyond, framed by towering oaks and beeches which made up the 30 acres of gardens surrounding the Hospital. To complete the afternoons proceedings tea was served under the excellent supervision of Mr Peter Mason of the County Hotel Catering Service, Canterbury.

During the time that Highland Court served as an annexe to the main hospital at Canterbury it was under the control of the matron Miss Sheehan, and staffed by nurses and trainees. The General Nursing Council had given its approval for student nurses to attend training periods of three months at Highland Court as it was considered to come under the same structure as Kent & Canterbury Hospital. Sister Souter was in charge of administration, sister Farmer was ward sister and Clothier was night sister.

Many patients awakened from anaesthetic after operation opened their eyes to see beautiful stick and daub decorated ceilings or to hear the birdsong drifting through the open windows. Post operative recuperation must have been aided by strolls in the sun shine or by sitting by the large lily pond. The warm friendly atmosphere is still fondly remembered by patients who spent their time in hospital at Highland Court.

The efficient and happy hospital continued its service until 1968, due to financial costs and an attempt to centralise its units at the main hospital at Canterbury it was decided to move the gynaecological unit back to Kent & Canterbury Hospital.

When the door closed after the last patient left, the hospital stood empty for four years until it was reopened in November 1972.

12. A home for the mentally handicapped.

In 1969 the parents of a twelve year old mentally handicapped Canterbury girl complained bitterly to the Kentish Gazette about the conditions at Leybourne Grange Hospital Maidstone. After the publicity given to the case by the newspaper the Hospital was visited by the then Minister of Health and Social

Security, Baroness Santa. In time this was followed by a Government Enquiry into hospitals for the mentally handicapped.

The main objective of this enquiry was to reduce overcrowding and to open smaller 'family' units wherever possible. It was to this end that Highland Court was considered. Bridge Blean Rural District Council gave its full approval to the scheme provided the Hospital management committee, voluntary organisations and any other interested bodies.

It was planned to open Highland Court as a residence for approximately 50 moderate to light handicapped patients who would not have to rely to heavily on nursing care and would enjoy a fair degree of independence.

A little resentment from local villagers was experienced when the idea was first broached but after one reassurance the idea was accepted. Any worries the villagers might have had, have been proved completely unfounded as the patients from Highland Court are accepted as part of the village scene. They have taken part in Jubilee celebrations, and won such events as Easter Bonnet Parades etc. The village primary school issues invitations to the patients whenever they have concerts and are always greeting them with warm welcomes. The hospital also depends on the help of voluntary workers from the village and also on the help and support of the local branch of the league of friends.

After months of meetings and discussions, approval was given finally and the task of redecorating and refurnishing the hospital began. It wasn't until just before Christmas 1972 that Highland Court hospital again opened its doors to yet another family.

The first six patients all boys, came during the week commencing 18th December 1972. All but one boy came from Leybourne Grange Hospital, and he came from Princess Christians Hospital Tonbridge. The six original boys are still living happily at Highland Court today.

Since its opening many more patients have joined the first few, a further twenty came the following year and in 1974 a further five. Two more came in 1975 and an additional one each year since. A few have left the hospital to go onto hostel accommodation but any vacancies are quickly filled and there is always a waiting list of patients who need to be accommodated on a full time basis.

Each month an average of five patients come to the hospital for short term care. These are patients who normally live at home but come into residential care for short periods while parents are on holiday or need a rest. Patients may always be accepted on this basis if an assessment is required by a consultant.

One day patient attends for two days a week so she can be helped with her education and training, and also so that she can socialise with other residents.

At the hospital patients lead a wide and varied social life within the hospital and outside. This includes discos, visits to the pub, social events with other hospitals and clubs, holidays in North Wales and trips to the Continent.

Some of the patients go to work in other hospitals, working in the greenhouse and carpentry workshops, while others attend the Adult training Centre at Cow Lane Wincheap, Canterbury. In the occupational Therapy Department at the Hospital patients are taught many arts and crafts and also learn cooking, house care and gardening.

The mansion house may have seen more elegant and extravagant days but never has a family lived so happily at Highland Court. Pop records have taken the place of orchestras from London as in previous eras, but never has so much pleasure been derived as by the mentally handicapped residents living to their full potential.

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