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BIFRONS

A Kentish Mansion

by

L. Laurence Boyle

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Particularly important for obtaining a detailed view of the outgoings and income for Bifrons were the ledger books of half-yearly accounts of the Bifrons and Minster estates which had been left in an oast house which has since been demolished. Robert Swift, the antiquarian bookseller of Egerton, rescued three of these from an empty house in Oaten Hill, Canterbury, which covered the periods 1865-68; Mrs Gabbe of Bekesbourne was thoughtful enough to find a home in Canterbury Cathedral Library* for the ledger covering the period 1896-1903 and the Earl of Mount Charles, now 7th Marquess Conyngham, deposited those for the period 1926-1932 which can now be found in the East Kent Archive Centre at Whitfield.

I am grateful to Mr. Paul Pollak, Archivist at The King's School, Canterbury, for information and advice on the status of various Bargrave boys in the school records.

* Shelf-mark U213.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Bifrons was a mansion house in Patixbourne, Kent, which was first built about 1609. reconstructed in 1791 and demolished in 1948.

CHAPTER TWO

The Bargrave Dynasty

(a) John Bargrave

We have no documentary evidence for the precise date when Bifrons was built but the architectural evidence leads one to conclude that the year was 1615 or possibly 1616. The original house was probably designed by Inigo Jones (1573–1652) in a Palladian style known in Britain as Jacobean Courtier (or Court) style. Jones learned the principles of this style during an architectural study tour with the Earl of Arundel in the Venice and Vicenza areas of Italy in the period July 1613 to September 1614. It was only in the last phase of this tour that Jones studied the Palladian palaces in Vicenza. The architectural details of Bifrons match well those of Houghton Court at Houghton Conquest in Bedfordshire. Since Houghton Court was built in 1615, any earlier date for Bifrons would be inconsistent with all known usage of this very characteristic style. No other contemporary architect is known to have been responsible for such buildings. Previous to 1815, houses were rather randomly-developed rather than symmetrical.

The original owner of Bifrons was John Bargrave. His father, Robert Bargar, was a yeoman farmer and tanner of Bridge who was born about 1540. Robert had married Joannah Gilbert, daughter of John Gilbert of Sandwich, on February 1st, 1568, and so we assume that John, his first son, was born in the early 1570s. John matriculated as a Fellow-Commoner at Clare College, Cambridge at Easter 1588 and was admitted to the Bar at Lincoln's Inn on November 7th, 1590. The Admissions Register shows that, on November 30th, John Bargar was granted "special admission" (which meant that he had certain privileges such as exoneration from keeping vacations or serving certain offices); the right of sitting at the Master's (*i.e.* Bencher's) Commons instead of the usual Fellows' Commons or the right of taking meals without the need of undergoing any legal exercises. Life in the City enabled John to meet (and marry in St. Mary Woolchurch Haw on February 13th, 1597)

CHAPTER TWO

The Bargrave Dynasty

(a) Robert Bargar

It has been suggested that Robert Bargar was the builder of Bifrons. Robert was born about 1540. As a yeoman farmer and tanner of Bridge he cannot be assumed to have had sufficient money to build a mansion house. He married Joannah Gilbert, daughter of John Gilbert of Sandwich, on February 1st, 1568 and we assume that his first son, John, was born in the early 1570s. There is no evidence from parish registers or elsewhere that he had anything to do with Bifrons or even Patricbourne. His will was proved in 1600 so we shall assume that Bifrons was built after his death.

(b) John Bargar, later known as John Bargrave

Robert and Joannah's son, John, matriculated as a Fellow-Commoner at Clare College, Cambridge at Easter 1588 and was admitted to the Bar at Lincoln's Inn on November 7th, 1590. The Admissions Register shows that on November 30th John Bargar was granted "special admission" which meant that he had certain privileges such as exoneration from keeping vacations or serving certain offices; the right of sitting at the Master's (*i.e.* Bencher's) Commons instead of the usual Fellow's Commons or the right of taking meals without the need of undergoing any legal exercises.

Life in the City enabled him to meet (and marry in 1597) Jane Crowche, the daughter of Giles Crowche, the armigerous haberdasher of Cornhill. John himself was granted arms in September 1611 so we can assume that by then he was a person of some financial standing — indeed, one who might well want the arms to go with his house.

By the time he had applied for arms, the transition in John's surname from the rather humble Bargar to the less humble Bargrave was complete. Bann has speculated extensively on the motives behind this change.¹

John's mother had died in December 1598 and when his father died soon after any estate would have to be used to provide for the other children, some of whom were of school age. Two well-documented examples are Richard, who was a scholar at The King's School, Canterbury, from 1598 to 1601, and Isaac who was born in 1586 and by 1625 had become Dean of Canterbury Cathedral.

The Bargar family of Robert and Joannah appeared to be quite well connected and financially stable. The main connection was probably through Sir John Boys who married Angell, one of John's sisters, on October 4th, 1604, in St. Mary's Church, Patrixbourne. We cannot assume that this implies that Bifrons was standing in 1604 as Bridge church was subsidiary to Patrixbourne church.

We know from parliamentary documents that John Bargrave owned a pinnace called the *Edwin* on May 4th, 1618, and that James Brett was its master. The evidence of the persons who travelled from the Port of London to Virginia recorded in the muster taken in the Virginia settlements in January and February 162⁴/₅ reveals that the *Edwin* had arrived from London each year from 1616 to 1619. There may have been other departures. Sir Edwin Sandys is reputed to have noted that Captain Bargrave had sent out various ships so the scale of Bargrave's investment cannot be assessed on the involvement in the *Edwin* alone. At least one other ship, a magazine, was noted. This would be for the commercial operations of carrying goods in both directions while the *Edwin* would have been primarily for passengers.

One of John's younger brothers, Thomas, who was the incumbent of the livings of Eythorne and Sevington, arrived in Virginia in 1619 to take up the post of director of the Episcopal church at Henricus (now known as Henrico) in St. John's, Richmond. He was the successor to the Rev. Alexander Whitaker who had gained fame as the minister who had baptised Pocahontas and married her to John Rolfe in 1614: unfortunately he drowned in the James River in 1617. Thomas himself died in Virginia in 1621 and left his library to the college in Henrico.

John Bargrave's brother, George, married Dorcas Martin, the daughter of Captain John Martin who was similarly involved in shipping to Virginia and was one of the pioneer planters.

John Bargrave was buried on October 24th, 1624, in the south chapel of Patricbourne church.

(b) Captain Robert Bargrave

The Acts of the Privy Council of England for March 31st, 1630, recorded that "this day John Bargrave, being sent for by their Lordships' warrant, appeared by his servant and was discharged from farther attendance upon his conformitie in finding such Armes as he is charged with, and withall to attend the Lord Chamberlaine, Lord Lieutenant of the County of Kent".

Exactly what happened to Bifrons after John Bargrave had finished with it is far from clear. According to Hasted, the actual sale of Bifrons took place late in 1661 or in 1662 when it was acquired by Sir Arthur Slingsby. However, Geoffrey Ridsdell Smith states, without indicating his source, in a section on the period from 1634–1638 that Bifrons was the family home of Sir Arthur Slingsby's father, Sir Guilford Slingsby, who had married Margaret Walters of York and had 8 sons and 4 daughters. A few pages earlier he reported that Sir Guilford, who was Comptroller of the Navy, had been lost at sea in 1633. Other reports give the date of the drowning as 1631 and so we have to conclude that either Sir Guilford's residence at Bifrons was very brief or that John Bargrave himself had vacated the property before he died, possibly on financial grounds, although he still had at least one servant at the time of the Privy Council summons. It is most likely that Sir Guilford, and subsequently his widow, had rented Bifrons from the Bargrave family and that it was eventually sold in 1661 to Sir Arthur Slingsby. This is in accordance with the epitaph in Patricbourne church which reads:—

Per totum hoc sacellum sparsa est	{	Generosa Bargraviana terra
Cujus familiæ armiger & Johannes Bifrontis Conditor Et Hæres ejus Robertus sub hoc Marmore una cum uxoribus	}	jacent
Bello civili ex p'tibus regiis Stetit et cecidit familia	}	Amen
Lugens Scripsit filius Et Frater Johan.	}	eccles X ^{ti} Cant Præb
Johan Hæres a ruinis In ruinas lapidem posuit	}	An. D. M. DCLXIII

Possible evidence for the continuation of the Bargrave ownership until 1661 would be that the sale was arranged by Sir Samuel Peyton of Knowlton Court. Sir Samuel's daughter, Elizabeth, had married John Bargrave's eldest son, Robert, in 1635 and, since Robert was a naval captain, the attractions of living at Bifrons were possibly neither desirable nor compelling.

CHAPTER THREE

The Slingsby Dynasty

(a) Sir Guilford Slingsby

Sir Guilford Slingsby married Margaret Walters, a daughter of William Walters, one of the aldermen of York. He lived at Bifrons with his family.

Sir Guilford was lost at sea in 1631. His wife was referred to as "Old Lady Slingsby" by Samuel Pepys in his Diary.

(b) Sir Arthur Slingsby

Sir Arthur Slingsby had a house near the park in Brussels.

Arthur was knighted at Brussels on June 24th, 1657 and created 1st Baronet of Bifrons by letters patent at Bruges on October 19th, 1657.

Arthur retired to Bifrons with his Flemish wife and their family and managed to purchase Bifrons from the Bargrave family in 1661 or 1662. His wife submitted a petition for the position of Lady of the Privy Chamber which had been promised her at Breda. She argued that she had lost all her fortune in the King's service and had left her country in the confident hope that her husband's faithful service would give him employment². Arthur himself appealed for their son, whose godfather was the King himself, to be made a Page of Honour to the Queen when the next vacancy occurred³. The comment has been made that it was the state of want, which seemed to be chronic with most cavaliers, that led Arthur to run a lottery.

Arthur became a Freeman of the City of Canterbury by gift on May 13th, 1664, in recognition of his having been instrumental in procuring the assize judges to come to the city.

Arthur died at Bifrons from a sudden fit of vomiting on February 12th, 166⁵/₆. He had been playing tennis at Whitehall only two days before.

(c) Sir Charles Slingsby

Arthur's eldest son, Charles, succeeded Arthur and became the second (and last) baronet of Bifrons. He was reported to have been under 21 in 1664 and so relatively young in his career. It would seem that Bifrons was an unnecessary luxury for him and so he sold it in 1667 and was reported as living abroad in 1669.

In 1681 he married a Mrs Mary Lee who was a well-known actress playing some classical rôles to some acclaim. She had been variously known for some time up to 1660 as Mrs Mary Aldridge and then as Lady Slingsby in the period 1681–1685. She died on March 1st, 169³/₄. Nothing further is known of the second baronet of Bifrons and the baronetcy lapsed.

CHAPTER FOUR

Thomas Baker

A merchant of London. who bought Bifrons from Sir Charles Slingsby and when he died it was sold to William Whotton.

CHAPTER FIVE

William Wootton

Hasted's reference to the purchase of Bifrons by a "William Whotton" is unlikely to refer to William Wotton (13.8.1666–172⁶/₇), the natural scientist. William had local roots, coming from the Wotton family of St. Alban's Court, Nonington. Having suffered a precocious youth in which he mastered Latin, Greek and Hebrew at the age of six, he was admitted to St. Catherine's Hall, Cambridge, at the age of nine, took his Bachelor of Arts when he was 12½, and became in time a Doctor of Divinity and a Fellow of the Royal Society. According to Nigel Ramsey⁴, there is ample evidence of scholars, such as the philologist William Wotton, using Canterbury Cathedral Library in the late 17th century. Bifrons would therefore have been a convenient residence for such work.

Equally reference to the William Wotton who was the vicar of Cholsey from 1662 does not fit Hasted's description of a London gentleman.

A more likely possibility is the William Wootton who was a warden of the Cordwainers' Company in 1685⁵.

CHAPTER SIX

Thomas Adrian

Thomas Adrian was born in Hammersmith in 1647 and married on November 11th, 1675 in Hammersmith, Ann Crisp who was the daughter of Ellis Crisp and his wife, Anna Strode. She died, however, on August 16th, 1677, after which Thomas married a Catherine, by whom they had a daughter Judith.

Thomas Adrian was the owner of Hode Farm from about 1680. He was a member of the Grand Jury at Maidstone Assizes on July 19th, 1687.

Thomas Adrian was Sheriff of Kent for the year 1690.

On November 28th, 1694, he and Catherine sold Bifrons, Hode Farm and other messuages, lands and appurtenances in Patricbourne, Bekesbourne, Littlebourne and Bridge to John Taylor of Hackney and his uncle, Brook Bridges of the Inner Temple, for £7,800⁶.

After Thomas Adrian died on April 15th, 1701, Catherine remarried Francis Wilkinson. Catherine died on January 21st, 1706.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Taylor Dynasty

(a) John Taylor

John Taylor was born on December 7th, 1655, the son of Nathaniel Taylour (as he spelt his surname), a Puritan who had supported Oliver Cromwell. Nathaniel had served as Recorder of Colchester at the time of the Commonwealth. Cromwell appointed him Member of Parliament for Bedford simply by writing a letter without bothering with the formality of an election. Nathaniel was fanatical. He had 18 children, mostly born in Brook House, Holborn. Several died young.

About 1679, John married Olive Tempest, the daughter of Sir Nicholas Tempest of Stella, Co. Durham and his wife Margaret Swinburne who was the daughter of the Sheriff of Northumberland. They had 14 children of whom the first three were girls — Mary, Olive and Margaret. Nathaniel died on January 15th, 1683, and so did not live to see their first son, Brook, who arrived on August 18th, 1685, when they were in Edmonton.

John purchased Bifrons and Hode Farm from Thomas Adrian on September 29th, 1694. Their son, James, died a year later. About 1696, John Closterman was commissioned to paint the surviving family in oil on canvas. This picture currently hangs in Beningbrough Hall. More children followed and

John became a Freeman of the City of Canterbury by gift in 1696.

In 1704, he purchased Bridge Place from the heirs of Walter Bræms (who had died in 1692) who had become so impoverished by its construction that they had to sell it. Surprisingly John demolished the greater part of his new acquisition leaving just one wing standing which he regarded as sufficient for a gentleman.

According to the Rev. Dr. John Harris⁷, there were in 1719 "some very large and fine hollies and two brick walls covered on each side with striped holly which is planted on one

side of the wall and made to bend down over the top and cover the other side to the bottom. The green walks are here also fine and covered with the cleanest turf I ever saw. About 500 yards below the house is a canal at the end of which are two islands and a little house built, which they call Trout Hall; in it are bathing places, some beds and rooms for company. The rivulet which makes the canal abounds with trout of two sorts, white and speckled, and in it are many loaches, some of which are often found in the trouts' bellies".

(b) Brook Taylor

Brook was educated at home by the vicar of Folkestone, the Rev. John Sackette, M. A. (Cantab.), who on October 24th, 1702 married (in St. Pancras' church, London, though recorded in Canterbury Marriage Licences) Brook's aunt, Margaret Tempest, who was resident in Bifrons at the time. Brook qualified for admission to Cambridge University as a Fellow-Commoner at age 15 but didn't go up until April 3rd, 17012/3. His tutor at St. John's College was no less than his brother-in-law, John Bowtell, who had married his elder sister, Olive, and who had been the vicar of Patricbourne since February 2nd, 1697/8, appointed by Brook's eldest sister, Mary. Brook matriculated in 1709 and was awarded the degree of Bachelor of Laws that same year.

On March 20th, 1711¹/₂ he was elected to the Royal Society, the foremost scientific society of which Sir Isaac Newton was president. Just 28 days later he was appointed to the committee whose remit it was to inspect the letters and papers relating to the dispute between Newton and Leibniz.

On January 14th, 1714 he was appointed a Secretary of the Royal Society as he was conversant with nearly all of the discoveries, which Sir Isaac Newton had made and was able to elucidate them in the most abstruse ways and also support them. His knowledge of languages enabled him to answer the pressing correspondence of foreign academies, which were engaging in wars of literature with the Royal Society. This contact with foreigners led to invitations which he felt too busy to accept. However, he did give in to a pressing invitation from Pierre

Rémond de Montmort, the Abbé Antonio Conti and others to meet them in Paris.

In 1714 he became a Doctor of Laws and was admitted to the grade of advocate in the Court of Arches, the ecclesiastical court of appeal of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Brook was always a favourite with the ladies and this was explained by his grandson on the basis of family sources as being due to the facts that he was remarkably handsome, that he was most elegant and that he had considerable social talents. He had been associated with Marcilly de Villette and Caroline Barton who was a beautiful and accomplished niece of Sir Isaac Newton.

Brook's mother, Olive, died in April 1716 and Brook returned to Bifrons. The funeral was on the 17th and on the 22nd Brook wrote⁸ to Newton asking for leave of absence until the summer recess. This meant that he did not take the minutes of the meetings from April 12th to May 17th which was a little difficult as the other Secretary, Dr. Edmund Halley, was also away.

Pierre Rémond de Montmort was a great admirer of Newton and had sent Brook a hamper of champagne out of which 50 bottles were to be passed on, "either by land carriage or by water" to Newton. The real destination of this wine was in fact Newton's bubbly niece, Catherine Barton, who had lived with Newton for nearly 20 years. She was admired by many of Newton's foreign visitors as well as de Montmort who had to be careful as he was married. Catherine had become available since the death in May 1715 of Charles Montagu, a predecessor of Newton as President of the Royal Society and also sometime Chancellor of the Exchequer, founder of the Bank of England and a great debater. His wife had died in 1698 and his relationship to Catherine Barton was variously described from one of a "secret marriage" or "open concubinage" to a more casual, but close, relationship. Montagu was created Baron of Halifax in 1700 and Earl of Halifax in 1714. She profited very substantially from his will and, notwithstanding the considerable competition for her at the time, she married in August 1717, at the age of 38, John Conduitt, an economist for

whom Newton had secured an appointment at the Mint. They had one child the following year.

Brook returned to London in February 1717 and the overwork necessary impaired his health. Consequently, he went on his doctor's orders to Aachen to take the waters. He decided he would prefer to study moral as well as natural philosophy and so, on October 21st, 1718, he wrote from Bifrons to Edmund Halley a letter of resignation from his office of Secretary asking that a successor be appointed at the next election. His reason for resignation was stated to be that he would not be spending enough time in London to enable him to discharge his duties. He returned from Aachen early in 1719.

Towards the end of 1720 Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, invited him to pass some time at the Chateau de La Source (near Orléans) which he been granted a life-lease of in the right of his second wife, Marie Clara des Champs de Marcilly, who was the widow of the Marquis de Villette. The two men became lifelong friends and in 1721 he returned to England.

Brook's scientific productivity had not completely declined once he had given up his Royal Society post but his last paper in the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* appeared in May 1721 and his biographer admitted that the lack of any further contributions indicated an "impaired state of mind".

Brook married Elizabeth Bridges of Wallington, near Croydon, in St. Mary Abchurch on July 4th, 1721. She was regarded as being of good family but no fortune and the absence of a dowry caused a complete rift between Brook and his father. This caused considerable unhappiness, especially for the new Mrs. Taylor, but some hope was given when John announced that if they produced a son all would be forgiven. Unfortunately, both she and their child died in childbirth on December 17th, 1722.

John commiserated with Brook, forgave him and almost as quickly his former affectionate regard returned. Brook moved back into Bifrons in the autumn of 1723 and Bolingbroke wrote him a letter of congratulation dated December 26th that year. Brook continued at Bifrons in 1724

and 1725: there were musical parties and the attentions of a numerous family welcoming an amiable brother ultimately persuaded him to being effectively retired in the country, domesticated and with fixed habits.

In 1725 Brook met Sabetha Sawbridge, daughter of Jacob and Penelope Sawbridge of Olantigh. He liked her and proposed marriage. The union enjoyed the full approval of his father as a dowry of no less than £4000 was involved. It appeared not to matter that Jacob Sawbridge had been disgraced by expulsion on January 23rd, 1720¹, from the House of Commons, where he had sat as the Member for Cricklade, for his leading part in the scam known as the "South Sea Bubble". Jacob's gross assets were assessed at £121,639 in 1721 and much of this remained after punitive levies had been made.

John Taylor died on April 4th, 1729, leaving his estate to Brook for his lifetime after which it should pass to Brook's son, if he had one; otherwise it should revert to John Taylor's successors. John had outlived his sons John, Nathaniel, James, Bridges and Upton so that only Herbert and four daughters, Mary, Olive, Margaret and Hannah, remained as potential inheritors. Brook and Sabetha set about acquiring a son and on March 20th, 1729³⁰, a daughter, Elizabeth, was born. Most unfortunate, however, was that Sabetha died in the process. Brook was naturally very upset.*

Brook's condition clearly gave his friend Bolingbroke cause for concern. That same month Bolingbroke asked John Brinsden of Durham Yard, a palace in the Strand, to visit Brook

* The fate of the orphan Elizabeth Taylor was not too bad. She married William Young on January 29th, 1747. He was the son of a Scottish physician of the same name who emigrated to the West Indies after the 1715 Uprising and married Margaret Nanton of Antigua. He became Lieutenant-Governor of Dominica and in 1769 was created 1st baronet Young of the Delaford estate in Buckinghamshire. They had seven children of whom the eldest son, also named William, (born in 1749) became the Governor of Tobago and died there in 1815. It is this William Young who wrote Brook Taylor's biography in 1791 while crossing the Atlantic and using the few letters left behind by Brook.

at Bifrons, as part of his trip to Calais to fetch the wine he had ordered, to ascertain the state of Brook's health.

Bolingbroke wrote to Brook from Dawley Farm, Middlesex, on January 3rd, 173⁰/₁ saying that John Brinsden had showed him a letter from someone wishing to be a tenant at Bifrons. This could be an innocent enquiry or be interpreted as indicating a bad financial situation: a view which is reinforced by a letter from Brook to his eldest sister, Mary, dated April 24th, 1731, in which he says he had arrived at Dawley where his host, Alexander Pope, the satirical poet and essayist, had enquired once they were alone about the situation of his affairs. Pope insisted on taking him to London to consult his own lawyers to ascertain fully the whole nature of his present circumstances. This language is indicative more of a financial, rather than a medical, problem.

The last news was final: Brook went into a decline from which he did not recover: he died in Somerset House on 20th November, 1731, and was buried in St. Anne's churchyard, Soho. His extensive personal library was sold to the Holborn bookseller, Fletcher Gyles, who offered them for sale "very cheaply" on February 22nd, 173¹/₂.

(c) **The Rev. Herbert Taylor**

Bifrons now passed to Brook's eldest surviving brother, Herbert, who was Rector of St. Alphege with St. Mary Northgate parish in Canterbury, a job which he retained for 27 years. He had married Mary Wake, the daughter of Dr. Edward Wake, a prebendary canon of Canterbury Cathedral and nephew of Archbishop Wake. Apart from a number of children who died in infancy and did not survive their father, Herbert and Mary had two sons, Herbert and Edward. Herbert, son of Herbert (as he was known), was born in 1731 and accordingly baptised in St. Alphege's church, Canterbury, while Edward was born in 1734 and therefore baptised in Patrixbourne.

Herbert, father of Herbert, had to wait until February 3rd, 1753, to become vicar of Patrixbourne as his predecessor, Dr. John Bowtell, occupied the post for nearly 55 years. He had been promised this living in the will of his father, John, who had conferred the right of patronage on his eldest child, Mary, on condition that she would give it to Herbert when it became vacant.

One of the tasks which Herbert assumed was the cataloguing of the 1078 books and a large quantity of individual sermons and pamphlets which John Bowtell had bequeathed for the use of parishioners. 431 of the books were located in the study over the hall of the vicarage while the rest occupied 13 shelves in another study. The sermons and pamphlets were kept in a chest under lock and key.

According to his will dated May 5th, 1738, his son, Edward, would inherit Bifrons.

It was agreed on June 6th, 1761 that the properties of Herbert the father would pass on to Herbert the son on his death. This then facilitated the indentures of lease and release dated June 8th and 9th, 1761, by which the Herbert Taylors raised a sum of £1000 from William Gason using as security the manors of Patrixbourne Cheney and Patrixbourne Merton with their appurtenances, 50 messuages, 1 forge, 2 malthouses, 3 dovehouses, 2 tanyards, 120 gardens, 800 acres of land, 100 acres of meadow, 100 acres of pasture, 100 acres of wood, 10 acres of hop ground and 200 acres of furze and heath, common or pasture.

Herbert died on September 29th, 1763, and was buried at Patrixbourne eight days later. The £1000 mortgage had not been repaid.

(d) Herbert, son of Herbert, Taylor

According to a document of June 16th, 1764, Herbert the son now wished to raise a further £2000 in addition to the £1000 already owed to William Gason. This was to be done through the good offices of Charles Wake. According to a document dated two days later, John Biggin of Belvedere and George Ward of Wandsworth would lend the £3000 and this would enable William Gason to be paid off. By December 18th, 1766, all interest on the £3000 had been paid off but the principal was still outstanding. James Brockman would lend the money to pay off John Biggin. The solicitor in this transaction was Isaac Bargrave of Lincoln's Inn Fields and Eastry Court, a great-great-greatnephew of the original builder of Bifrons. The tenure of Herbert, son of Herbert, was only just over 4 years as he died, unmarried, on November 19th, 1767.

(e) The Reverend Edward Taylor

On his brother's death, the Reverend Edward Taylor inherited the Bifrons estate and its mortgages. He had been vicar of Patrixbourne since November 16th, 1763, in succession to his father, the Reverend Herbert Taylor. He was unmarried at the time of taking over the responsibilities of Bifrons but soon remedied this by marrying Margaret Payler of Ileden in St. Martin-in-the-Fields church, Westminster, on February 23rd, 1769. The marriage agreement of February 2nd shows that Margaret had a considerable personal fortune — over £8000 — part of which consisted of £3705 of Capital Bank stock. This effectively solved the financial problems of the Bifrons owners for what was to be just one generation. Margaret's brother Thomas Watkinson Payler, was resident in Patrixbourne on January 29th, 1771, when he married, by licence in Patrixbourne, Charlotte Hammond, a daughter of William Hammond of St. Alban's Court, Nonington. When their father,

Dering, who died on the same day as the Reverend Edward Taylor, might pass to Captain Edward Taylor.

(f) Captain Edward Taylor

(i) Captain Edward Taylor's early life

Edward Taylor was educated in Baden from 1783 to 1788. Unlike his younger brothers Herbert, Brook and William, Edward Taylor did not have a career arranged for him through the Foreign Office connections. He went up to Merton College, Oxford, where he matriculated in 1793. In 1795 he became a captain in His Majesty's Regiment of New Romney Fencible Dragoons which meant that, although a regular soldier, he would only fight at home and then only in times of hostilities. When the Rev. Edward Taylor died on December 8th, 1798, Edward, was only 24 years old. It would appear that he was not in too healthy a financial state.

(ii) The marriage agreement with Louisa Beckingham

A financial settlement between Captain Edward Taylor and his wife, Louisa Beckingham, was formalised by indentures of lease and release respectively dated 30th and 31st August 1802. It provided some short-term relief for Edward and some longer-term headaches. The dowry was to amount to £5000 of which £4000 was to be used to pay off the debt to John Dilnot and £1000 was for Edward's own use. Further, in the event that Louisa would outlive Edward, she was to have the choice to make Bridge Place her residence for an annual rent of £50. She would also get an annual pension of £400.

The £1000 was insufficient to enable Edward to pay off his debts which at the time of his marriage were £2000 to his brother, Brook (1777–1846); £800 to his brother, Bridges (1777–1814); £500 to Eleanor Thompson (*née* Marsh), a widow living in Bridge; and a further £500.

It appeared by May 1st, 1804, that Edward Wilbraham-Bootle and Daniel Mesman had been unable to raise the sums of £5000 and £2000, which were needed to pay off Edward's debts. The situation was alleviated by Edward's cousin,

CHAPTER EIGHT

Captain Taylor's Tenants

(a) Abraham Parry Cumberbatch

The dating of the departure of the Taylor family from Bifrons and their renting it out depends on the evidence of the records of St. Mary's church. The Taylors buried an infant daughter, Charlotte Margaret, in the churchyard on July 16th, 1819. Abraham Parry and Caroline Cumberbatch baptised their daughter, Emma, there on January 30th, 1820. This suggests that the Cumberbatch tenancy commenced at Michaelmas 1819.

Abraham Parry Cumberbatch had been previously married to Charlotte Jones who had died in January 1818. He married Caroline Chaloner of Guisborough on April 19th, 1819, and so the move to Bifrons had some of the character of a fresh start. The three children of his first marriage, Abraham Carlton, Eliza and Benjamin William Robert, all came to Bifrons with him. Unfortunately Benjamin died at Bifrons on May 7th, 1820. Following the birth of Emma, Abraham and Caroline had three more children but the first of these, Robert William, was baptised in Tunbridge Wells in February, 1822, and hence we obtain the latest quarter day for the end of the Cumberbatch tenancy as probably some time in 1821. If the house remained unlet for a period the Cumberbatch tenancy could have ended as early as Midsummer 1820.

It is difficult to guess why the Cumberbatches should have wished to rent Bifrons. His roots were at Bristol where his father and paternal grandfather were both buried in the cathedral itself. Like them, Abraham Parry was born in Barbados and owned several sugar plantations there. Much of his work involved the triangular journeys between Bristol, Africa and Barbados and the number of slaves he had working on his plantations is recorded as late as 1830. On leaving Bifrons the Cumberbatches seemed to have chosen Tunbridge Wells for their residence, although their last child, Robert William, was born in Queen's House, Lyndhurst, in 1827. Abraham Parry died in Tunbridge Wells on October 10th, 1840, aged nearly 56.

Of the children, Abraham Carlton became Consul-General at İstanbul (then known as Constantinople) and was appointed a Companion of the Order of the Bath. He died on October 24th, 1875, at Bingham House, Richmond. His will revealed that he had a settled estate in Barbados.

(b) The Second Marquis of Ely

John Loftus was born on February 15th, 1770, and became the 2nd Marquess of Ely in the Peerage of Ireland on the death of his father on March 22nd, 1806. On May 22nd, 1810, he married Anna Maria Dashwood, daughter of Sir Henry Watkin Dashwood, 3rd Baronet of Kirtlington Park, Oxfordshire. She held household appointments under Queen Charlotte and Queen Adelaide. Their first child, Charlotte Elizabeth, was born in Co. Fermanagh on April 22nd, 1811. Their first son, Henry Robert, was born on March 15th, 1813, but died exactly a month later. Their heir, John Henry, Viscount Loftus, was born in Hill Street, near Berkeley Square, on January 19th, 1814.

The date on which the Marquis and Marchioness of Ely began to rent Bifrons from the Taylors is not totally clear. The first Loftus to be baptised in Patricbourne was Henry Yorke Astley on April 12th, 1822, followed by Caroline Louisa on April 19th, 1824, and Elizabeth Caroline Augusta on July 30th, 1826.

In 1824, John was appointed *Custos rotulorum* for Co. Wexford.

John died on September 26th, 1845 at Ely Lodge in Co. Fermanagh. Anna Maria died at Hampton Court Palace on September 6th, 1857. Charlotte Elizabeth married William Tatton Egerton, the Member of Parliament for ????????? on December 18th, 1830. He became Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire in 1868. John Henry went into politics, contesting Gloucester in 1841 and becoming Member of Parliament for Woodstock from May 1st to September 26th, 1845, when he succeeded his father.

(c) Lady Noel Byron and the Trevanions

Annabella, Lady Noel Byron, did not like Bifrons and never overcame this distaste in the four years she rented it. It was

effectively a base from which she could set off on trips and leave her chattels in comparative safety. For most of the period of the tenancy, Annabella was abroad. She never liked Bifrons. We know that she travelled with her friend, Louise Chaloner, her daughter, Ada, and her daughter's governess. She lent Bifrons to Henry Trevanion and his wife, Georgiana Augusta Leigh (known as "Georgey"), as they were desperately poor at the time. They had three children in as many years. One of these, Ada, was baptised in Patricbourne on June 8th, 1828. However, they were to be joined by Medora Leigh, (known earlier as "Do" and later by her first name "Elizabeth" or "Libby") who became pregnant by Henry.

The affair was reported by the neighbours to the rural dean, the Rev. William Eden, who consulted George, 7th Lord Byron, and his wife, Mary, and reported the matter to Lady Noel Byron. As a consequence Annabella provided enough financial assistance for the Trevanions and Libby to emigrate to Calais where a baby boy was born in February 1830. It was left in the care of a doctor but died of convulsions when about two months old. The whole matter was hushed up as far as Libby's mother, Augusta, was concerned and given the lack of communication in the family this situation was not difficult to maintain.

CHAPTER NINE

The Conynghams in Residence 1830–1882

(a) The First Marquess Conyngham

The sale by auction of the Bifrons Estate for the then phenomenal sum of £95,600 may well have fuelled speculation that it had been bought by King George IV, if Greenwood's account¹⁰ of 1838 is to be understood. At the time, the local newspapers seemed unaware that the Conynghams would be moving from Windsor to Bifrons. The death of King George IV coincided very well with the completion of the deeds of sale and in principle the Conynghams could have moved straight in. The following account¹¹ of the Conynghams' departure from Windsor on Saturday, June 26th, 1830, is sufficiently amusing to merit transcription:

"The Marchioness Conyngham, with the ladies of her family, were very busy packing up during the whole of Saturday morning and her ladyship, with a carriage full of ladies, set out from Windsor with four horses at a quarter past 12 on Saturday and drove with haste to Mr. Denison's (her brother's) house near Dorking where she arrived before dinner. The people about the castle understood that her Ladyship intended to go to Paris. The Marquess of Conyngham remained behind at the Palace, the corridor of which, near the late King's suite of apartments, he paced like a man lost in abstraction; and it was not till one o'clock he was reminded that he had important duties to perform in London with the new court and Parliament. He then, as if suddenly recollecting himself, ordered a chaise and four and came to town with all speed, arriving at Westminster at 20 minutes before 4 o'clock, just in time to enable the Speaker to take the Chair in the House of Commons, after being sworn in the long gallery".

On acquiring Bifrons, the Conynghams appointed the architect Thomas Frederick Hunt to design various extensions. Hunt was at that time Clerk of the Works at Kensington Palace and was well thought of in Court circles as well as at the Office of Works. He did, however, live beyond his means and was constantly harassed by bailiffs because he was always in debt. We can date the time of these extensions quite accurately because they would hardly have been commissioned before

completion of the sale in June 1830 and could not have been done after Hunt died, at the age of 40, on January 4th, 1831.

B. M. Thomas has discussed the possibility that Hunt might have designed the extensions between 1815 and 1824 but has noted that Ireland¹² made no mention of any such extensions in 1829. Given that the known financial state of Edward Taylor and his need to maintain Bourne Park, he would have surely been precluded from making any significant expenditure on extensions at Bifrons. Furthermore, it was reported in the local newspapers^{13,14} that, in the short period since the Conynghams purchased Bifrons, "large sums have been expended in beautifying the mansion, which has given employment to upwards of 50 persons".

A further enhancement of Bifrons was occasioned by the auction at East Cliff House, Ramsgate, of the 635 dozen bottles of fine wine which its wealthy occupant, Sir William Curtis, had failed to consume before death. Curtis is renowned as the illiterate Lord Mayor of London of 1795 who proposed a toast to "The Three R's — Reading, 'Riting and 'Rithmetic". The Bifrons accounts show that the cost of the Marquess's purchase of 362 bottles for £82. 18s. 11½d was debited from the estate account rather than the Marquess's personal drawings.

The accounts for Michaelmas 1830 give a realistic impression of the tradesmen's bills one had to face at the time:—

Beazeley	dyer	£	13s.	11d.
		1		
		8		
		.		
Sharp	upholsterer	£		10d.
		1	11s.	
		3		
		.		
Keeler	glass men (discounted)	£	5s.	6d.
		7		
		.		
Kingsford's	coal merchants	£	19s.	0d.
		1		

		9		
Fisher	tinman	· £	1s.	3d.
		2		
Wright	wine merchant	· £	10s.	0d.
		1		
Martin	collar maker	·	11s.	11d.
Qusted	coal baskets		8s.	0d.
Cook	chimney sweep		18s.	0d.
	sundry small bills per abstract			
	2 visits to Bifrons and gift to servants	£	19s.	6 ³ / ₄ d.
		6		
Beioley	linen drapes for toilets	·	7s.	0 ¹ / ₂ d.
G. Denne	ton hay for horses	£	0s.	0d.
		4		
B. Helps	for 12 pheasants and expenses to and from London	· £	19s.	6d.
		1		
		3		
T. Collard	for keeper's suit of clothes	· £	10s.	0d.
		6		
Wm. Vickers	22 weeks wages as keeper and carpenter	· £	1s.	0d.
		2		
		3		
F. Colegate	tenants' dinner	· £	4s.	0d.
		9		
		·		

	sundry cottagers' usual presents	£	13s.	9d.
	on prompt payment of their			
	rents subject to your Lordship's	1		
	pleasure (½ year)	.		
	stamps for receipts	£	5s.	0d.
		1		
		.		
	stamps for postage	£	0s.	0d.
		1		
		.		
	extras		5s.	0d.
	2 journies [<i>sic</i>] to Isle of Thanet	£	2s.	0d.
	on your Lordship's account, <i>viz.</i>	2		
	Minster tenants and East Cliff	.		
	wine sale: hire horses <i>etc.</i>			
	2 days attending Mr. Wright in	£	2s.	0d.
	survey of Sir Henry Oxenden's	2		
	Hearne [<i>sic</i>] Estate by order	.		
	horse and gig			
[R. Pilcher]	Agency – ¾ year from Lady	£	0s.	0d.
	Day to 31 December	7		
		5		
		.		
	extra labourers for river course	£	15s.	11d.
	timber felling and fences	9		
		.		

Richard Pilcher was appointed Steward of Bifrons¹⁵ which entailed keeping the books and receiving, depositing and disbursing monies as well as the administration of the house and estates.

Henry died on December 28th, 1832, at his London residence and was buried in a vault in the chancel of Patrixbourne church on January 4th. The Kentish Gazette reported that he "was distinguished for his unostentatious demeanour and great urbanity of manners, united to a cheerful temper and an unparalleled evenness of mind, which had gained

for him the affections of all who had the pleasure of his society and those employed under him”.

(b) The Dowager Marchioness Conyngham

Following the death of the 1st Marquess, Bifrons essentially became the home of the Dowager Marchioness since her eldest surviving son, Francis Nathaniel, the 2nd Marquess, was fully occupied in the Royal Household. The two daughters had both married, the younger just six days before her father's death. This left just the youngest son, Albert Denison Conyngham, as the remaining unmarried child who might use Bifrons as a base when not in London.

Lord Albert was born at 8, Stanhope Street, Piccadilly, on October 21st, 1805, and was educated at Eton from 1820. On September 21st of that year his name, with the rank of cornet, was placed on the half-pay list of the disbanded 22nd regiment of dragoons. On July 24th, 1823, he joined the Horse Guards but retired after 12 months. In May 1824 he entered the Diplomatic Service and was appointed Attaché at Berlin where he improved his knowledge of the German language. In May, 1825, he transferred to Vienna where he was similarly Attaché. In February, 1828, he became Secretary of the Legation at Florence and from January, 1829, until June 1831, was Secretary at Berlin.

King George IV created him Knight Commander of the Order of the Guelphs in 1829 and he was also named a Deputy-Lieutenant of the West Riding of Yorkshire.

On July 6th, 1833, Albert married Henrietta Maria, the fourth daughter of Cecil Weld, 1st Baron Forester, at St. George's Church, Hanover Square. Their first child, Henry, was born on June 19th, 1834.

Following his military and diplomatic experience he sought a career in the Houses of Parliament, following in the footsteps of his uncle, William Joseph Denison, who had sat as the Member for Kingston-upon-Hull in 1808 and who had been the Whig Member for Surrey, a post he retained until his death in 1849.

Preparation for the parliamentary election held on the 8th and 9th of January, 1835, began some six months earlier. Despite the Reform Act of 1832, the lucrative practice of bribery persisted in Canterbury elections. The voter would be nominated a "colourman" and given a ticket which was exchangeable after the election for a reward on the basis of 5s. per day. The number of days varied but typically the reward would be 10s. or £1. No work was required for the payment although the more ardent supporters would protect the colours. Between the voter and the party leaders were agents who often profitted very handsomely: it was not uncommon for £20 or £30 to be paid for the sale of a dozen votes. The agents further charged for the "sale" of votes without the knowledge of the relevant voters themselves who saw nothing of the reward paid to the agent for them.

On this occasion¹⁵, 320 colourmen were paid £1 each for the four days — 1 day for the nomination, 2 for the voting and 1 for the declaration. The agent was a Mr. Birch at whose house the colourmen were paid by Richard Pilcher. The total election expenses for Lord Albert Conyngham alone came to £1400 18s. 9d. of which a direct subsidy of £1000 was paid by his uncle as a transfer from his own bank in two tranches of £500 on the 7th and 12th of January.

In 1835, Lord Albert published a translation* of the three volumes of Carl Spindler's historical novel *Der Bastard: eine deutsche Sittengeschichte aus den Zeitalter Kaiser Rudolph des Zweiten*.

He was granted the Freedom of the City of Canterbury in 1835.

The second Marquess separated from his wife in 1841 and divorce proceedings were being considered in 1843. There is no record of any reconciliation but they were buried next to each other in Patricbourne.

* Carl Spindler, "The Natural Son: a German tale descriptive of the age of the Emperor Rudolph II" translated by Lord A. Conyngham, 3 volumes (London: J. Mitchell; 1835).

One of the favourite hobbies of the 2nd Marquess was yachting. He was an ordinary member of the Kingstown* Boat Club and offered to use his influence with Queen Victoria to get the privileges of a Royal Yacht Club conferred. By May 1845 both Queen Victoria and Prince Albert had agreed and in 1846 the Marquess became the first Commodore of the Royal Kingstown Yacht Club. He flew the club's Burgee on his 186-ton schooner *The Flower of Yarrow*. In 1847, the club was renamed as the Royal St. George Yacht Club though the reason for including St. George in the name is unclear. In 1850, he launched the 218-ton schooner (built by Joseph White in East Cowes) *Constance* which secured him a permanent place in the history of yachting. He resigned as Commodore in 1863 due to ill-health and took up the less arduous position of Vice-Commodore from 1865 until his death a few days before the club's 1876 regatta.

(i) The sale of Bourne Park

It was an aspect of the Dowager Marchioness's character that the idea of having freeholders near Bifrons was undesirable and that any property which became available should be bought. Consequently when Bourne Park came up for sale in 1844 every effort had to be made to purchase it since it was contiguous with the Bifrons estate. The vendors were the executors of the recently-deceased widow, Mrs. Louisa Beckingham, who had actually resided at 18, Marine Crescent, Dover and rented out her mansion. As Mrs. Beckingham was the mother-in-law of the Edward Taylor from whom the Conynghams had bought Bifrons, the Dowager Marchioness thought she should have first refusal. But the executors were rather more shrewd than expected given that there was clear competition from a Matthew John Bell who had been renting *Oswalds* in nearby Bishopsbourne since 1841 as a temporary measure until he could find something more suitable. The sale was to be effected by the private tender of sealed bids and subject to the condition that the highest bid should be accepted.

* Kingstown, Co. Dublin, is now known as Dún Laoghaire.

Matthew Bell's offer turned out to be £150 higher than that of the Marchioness¹⁶.

(ii) Lady Jane Conyngham's wedding

The social highlight of Patricxbourne in 1849 must have been the wedding of Lady Jane Conyngham to Francis George Spencer on May 19th. The chancel of St. Mary's church had been restored at the Marchioness's expense this year. She had given six more pieces of Flemish painted glass for the small, unmoulded, Norman windows in the north and south walls. The architect responsible was a Mr. Marshall of Canterbury and his work was well spoken of by Sir Gilbert Scott 8 years later when he came to restore the whole building. The splendid occasion was recorded in the local newspaper¹⁷ where it was reported that the marriage had taken place "in the presence of a select circle of relatives and friends of both parties and a large congregation of neighbours, together with upwards of 100 schoolchildren, arranged under a tastefully-formed laurel bower, interspersed with all kinds of flowers which extended from the entrance of the churchyard to the porch. After a most impressive service the children sang an appropriate hymn, composed for the occasion, which had a very pleasing effect".

The official guest list can be deduced from the newspaper report with a bit of detective work and tolerance for journalistic euphemisms such as "The Rev. A. Steward" who was perhaps a useful clerical version of "Mr. A. N. Other". The guests then appear to have been the Dowager Marchioness Conyngham (*bride's grandmother*), the Ladies Elizabeth and Cecilia Conyngham (*bride's sisters*), Lady Louisa Spencer (*a sister of the groom*), the Misses Fitzroy, Miss Elizabeth Somerville (*cousin*), Miss Augusta Conyngham (*a sister of the bride*), Lord Mount Charles (*her brother, George Henry*), Mrs Stevenson (*vicar's wife, née Margaret St. Leger Kippen*), Miss Stevenson (*vicar's daughter*), Miss Kippen (*vicar's sister-in-law*), Miss Wildman, Lady Maria Tollemache (*née Anna Maria Jane Seymour, daughter of the 11th Duke of Somerset*), her daughters Emma Maria and Matilda Jane (*both aged about 9-10 years*), the Dean of Canterbury (*William Rowe Lyall, a successful seeker of patronage and equally successful in the art*

of nepotism), Matthew and Fanny Bell (*owner-occupiers of Bourne Park*), Lady Louisa Spencer (*a sister of the groom*), Major Spencer (*probably The Hon. Sir Augustus Almeric Spencer, a brother of the groom*), Commander Spencer (*probably The Hon. John Welbore Spencer, another brother of the groom*), Rev. Charles Oxenden (*Rector of Barham, Vicar of Eastwell and sometime Honorary Canon of Canterbury Cathedral*), Miss Montessori and Miss Charlotte Georgiana Oxenden (*25-year old daughter of Charles Oxenden*).

(iii) The restoration of St. Mary's Church

The chancel of St. Mary's church was completely restored under the direction of George Gilbert Scott in 1857. His firm was responsible for such "restorations" (in Gothic revival style) of some 500 churches and 39 cathedrals: previous projects had included the Martyrs' Memorial (1841), St. John's College chapel and Exeter College chapel in Oxford. Subsequent successes included the Albert Memorial (1862-3), St. Pancras Station (1865) and the Home and Colonial Office (1858 on). His firm was the largest architectural firm of the period so it is difficult to attribute any particular restoration to him personally. He was knighted in 1872 and when he died in 1878 he was buried in Westminster Abbey.

(iv) Death of the Dowager Marchioness

The end of a great era was signalled by the death of the Dowager Marchioness Conyngham on October 11th, 1861. Her will made interesting reading: she gave her son Albert any picture in her home at Bifrons or Hamilton Place. To Lady Albert Denison, his wife, she gave any pictures of Lord Albert in either house. [It is to be noted that since Albert was by this time very rich he was deemed not to need any other legacies].

[Silver] plates and plated articles, linen, china, furniture, the remaining pictures, statues, books and prints in both houses were bequeathed to Francis Nathaniel, her eldest surviving son and 2nd Marquess Conyngham. Her diamonds were bequeathed to him for his life and after his death to Lord Mountcharles (*i.e.* George Henry, the eldest son of the 2nd Marquess and successor to the marquessate) for his life and

after his death to whoever is Marquess Conyngham. One must assume that some of these diamonds had been acquired from King George IV.

She was empowered by the will of her late brother, William Joseph Denison, dated August 3rd, 1848, to dispose of £30,000 to her granddaughters. Accordingly she left £6000 to Augusta Elizabeth Denison to be paid on the day she married or reached 21, whichever be the sooner. She further left £4000 to executors as trustees to invest and pay to Augusta Elizabeth at the same time.

She left her sister, the Rt. Hon. Lady Anna Maria Wenlock, an annuity of £500 for her life to be paid quarterly. [She had in fact died on August 20th, 1850.] She left her son-in-law, the Rt. Hon. Sir William Meredyth Somerville*, the sum of £2000. The family solicitor, John Benbow, was left £500 and her steward, Robert Pilcher, £100. Each of her male servants who have lived with her for three years prior to her death received £50 while the female equivalents got £25. £100 was left to the parish of Patricbourne for distribution to the poor of the parish of Patricbourne and Bridge by the vicar, the Rev. John Stevenson. £100 was to be distributed to the poor of Templecrone, Co. Donegal, by the minister of that parish, Frederick Corfield. The rest was to go to her son, the 2nd Marquess, and she appointed him and Sir William Meredyth Somerville as executors. Under a codicil, she withdrew the money awarded to Augusta as she had plenty and bequeathed £24,000 to the four daughters of the Marquess.

(i) The building works of 1862-1863

* He had married her sister Maria who died on December 3rd, 1843 and in 1860 had remarried Maria Georgiana Elizabeth Jones. In civil life he was the Member of Parliament for Drogheda from 1837 to 1852 and for Canterbury from 1854 to 1865. He held office as Under-Secretary for the Home Department from 1846 to 1847 and as Chief Secretary for Ireland from 1847 to 1852. He was created Baron Athlumney in the Peerage of Ireland in 1863 and Baron Meredyth in the Peerage of the United Kingdom in 1866. He died in Dover on December 7th, 1873.

The death of the Dowager Marchioness provided a suitable break in the occupation of the house to modernise it and remedy the defects which had accrued with age. Accordingly, four contracts were drawn up:-

1. The original contract for alterations to the mansion and the stables dated May 21st, 1862, costing £5268.0s.0d.
2. An extra contract for alterations to the sole of the stables dated August 18th, 1862, costing £602.13s.3d.
3. A contract for repairs to the ground floor and part of one floor dated September 4th, 1862, costing £308.0s.0d plus £43. 0s. 0d. for paving of the conservatory.
4. A contract dated December 10th, 1862,

(c) The 2nd Marquess Conyngham

The *Kentish Gazette*¹⁸ relates details of social life at Bifrons in late October 1874 as follows:-

“The Earl and Countess of Mountcharles have been entertaining company during the past week at Bifrons, near Canterbury; the house party including Viscount Neville, Viscount Grimston, Captain and Mrs Streatfield, Mr and Mrs Sands, *etc.* The gentlemen have had excellent sport at pheasant shooting. The Earl and Countess entertained a numerous company at dinner who afterwards attended the Hunt Ball at Waldershare being given by the Earl and Countess of Guilford to inaugurate the hunting season. The Earl of Mountcharles, according to his ancient custom, since his residence in Kent, has supplied the Kent and Canterbury Hospital, also the Cottage Hospital at Ashford, with an abundance of game, the result of his Lordship and friends’ sport”.

Jane, 2nd Marchioness Conyngham, died at her residence at 14, Marine Parade, Folkestone, on January 28th, 1876¹⁹ and the following Wednesday, February 2nd, her remains were deposited in the family vault in St. Mary’s Church, Patixbourne. Her estranged husband, Francis, was unable to attend due to a severe attack of gout²⁰ and her youngest son, Francis, was travelling in Egypt at the time. Consequently the chief mourner was her eldest son, George, Earl of Mountcharles.

The 2nd Marquess Conyngham died at his London residence, 5 Hamilton Place, Piccadilly, on July 17th, 1876

following a lithotomy operation four days earlier. His will, dated October 18th, 1874, with a codicil thereto dated April 1876, was proved on September 25th, 1876, by the executors, the Rt. Hon. Charles John Colville, 10th Baron Colville of Culross and Chamberlain to Queen Alexandra, and John Henry Benbow, the solicitor, with the personal estate being sworn to be under £500,000.

His will specified that £100,000 was to be raised for the purchase of any property in Kent from his real estate in England and Wales and was to form part of his residuary personal estate. After this he specified that all his real estate and also that in Ireland was to devolve to the use of his son, George Henry, for life, with remainder to Henry Francis Conyngham, the son of George Henry, 3rd Marquis Conyngham. The fate of his leasehold property was settled similarly. He left his son, Francis Nathaniel, and his four daughters £10,000 each, and in trust for his two grandsons, Theodore Francis Brinckman and Victor Albert Francis Charles Spencer £5000 each and £2000 for each of the children of his daughter Lady Frances Caroline Maria Lambart. Each of his executors received £500 as a mark of his esteem and the vicar of Patricbourne, the Rev. Dr. John Stevenson, got £250. Legacies were also left to the servants according to the length of their service. His eldest son received the furniture, pictures, plate and household effects together with a pecuniary legacy of £20,000. His trustees were directed to keep up the payment of certain voluntary allowances made by him and the residue of his property was to be divided equally between his younger son and his four daughters,

(d) George Henry, 3rd Marquess Conyngham

When George Henry succeeded to the Marquessate at the age of 51 in July 1876, he had already retired from his military career and since 1872 had been equerry to Queen Victoria. He was therefore logically based in London most of the time.

When his eldest son, Henry Francis, Earl of Mountcharles, celebrated his coming-of-age in October 1878, the Marquess was unable to attend due to his continuing indisposition²¹ and the festivities were largely held in several locations in Bridge. Those involved included about 40 workmen who were engaged in extensive alterations and improvements to the mansion.

Like his father, George Henry was figured in *Vanity Fair*. This cartoon appeared with the epithet "Bill" on January 1st, 1881.

When the 3rd Marquess died on June 2nd, 1882, the Inland Revenue Legacy Receipts under the Legacy Duty Act provide an insight for us into his domestic establishment, which we must presume were those based at Bifrons. The executors were the Most Honorable James Edward William Theobald Butler, 3rd Marquis of Ormonde, and the solicitor, William Henry Saltwell of Lincoln's Inn. The will provided each domestic servant who had been in his service for two years or more with two years' wages! However, since all of the servants were "strangers in blood", 10% duty had to be paid. The beneficiaries and the gross sums received were:- Mary Ann Lynagh (£24), Margaret ("Maggie") Leonard (£28), Mary Ratcliffe (£36), Eliza List (£40), Caroline Elizabeth Long (£60), Fanny Gill (£100), William Henry Archer (£80), William Littlewood (£120), James Hosacks (£160), Martha Logan (£34), Caroline White (£44), Elizabeth Mary Critoph (£46), Edith Charlotte Moffrey (£50) and Anne Payne (£120). There was also a pecuniary legacy of £200 for the benefit of the poor of the parish of Patricbourne entrusted to the vicar, Francis Thomas Vine, and subject to the same 10% duty. More substantial legacies were paid to William H. D. Fitzgerald (£500), William Henry Saltwell, the solicitor, (£500), Robert Hipisley Cox (£200), Edgcome Venning F.S.E.C.S. (£200) and The Marquis of Ormonde (£500). This last bequest was only

subject to 6% duty as the Marquis was a descendant of a brother of the grandfather of the deceased.*

The funeral was a magnificent occasion for the village in which the church was filled with distinguished mourners. The *Kentish Gazette*²² reported that the simplicity and absence of ostentation did not in any way detract from the impressive and affecting character of the ceremony. The body had arrived at Canterbury East station where it was transferred to a hearse. The cortège arrived at noon and the body was met at the gate of the churchyard by the Rev. Francis T. Vine (*vicar*), the Rev. John H. Hughes Hallett (*chaplain of the East Kent Yeomanry and rector of Westbere*), the Rev. Henry John Wardell (*vicar of Bekesbourne*) and the Rev. F. N. Ripley (*curate of Bridge and Patribourne*). The coffin was carried by 8 estate workmen.

The Marquess was buried in the family vault in the chancel of St. Mary's church in a nest of three coffins — two wooden and one leaden. The outer coffin had a massive cross carved in plain oak on the lid. The eight solid brass handles had a coronet above each. On the pediment of the cross was a plate bearing the inscription "The Most Honourable George Henry Marquess Conyngham; born February 14th, 1825; died June 2nd, 1882". Above the inscription was the coat-of-arms of the Conyngham family.

Wreaths had derived from the following sources:- The Queen, Princess Beatrice (*the Queen's youngest daughter*), Sir Moses Montefiore, the Marchioness of Headfort, Lady Ventry and the crew of the yacht *Minerva*.

The pall-bearers were the 3rd Marquis of Ormonde, the Hon. Victor Churchill, Sir Theodore Brinckman and Mr. Gustavus William Lambart.

In the vault were the coffins of Henry, Marquess Conyngham (†1832) and his wife Elizabeth (†1861), Francis Nathaniel (†1876) and his wife Jane (†1876).

* The 3rd Marquess Conyngham's maternal grandfather was Henry William Paget, 2nd Earl of Uxbridge and 1st Marquis of Anglesey. One of his younger brothers was General the Hon. Edward Paget, whose eldest daughter, Frances Jane, married John Butler, the 2nd Marquis of Ormonde.

Mr. Bradbury Tassell played the organ. More wreaths were deposited in the vault.

The mourners included the Dowager Marchioness, the present Marquess (*elder son, Henry Francis*) and Lady Mount Charles (*daughter-in-law, Frances Elizabeth Sarah Blakeney née Eveleigh de Moleyns*), Lord Charles Conyngham (*younger son*), Lady Blanche (*eldest child*), Lady Jane Seymour Conyngham (*third daughter*), Lady Elizabeth Maud Conyngham (*fourth daughter*), Lady Florence Conyngham (*fifth daughter*), Lady Churchill (*eldest sister*), Lady Fanny Lambart (*second sister*), Mr. Harry Combe (*eldest sister's father-in-law*), Mr. Richard and Lady Constance Combe (*eldest sister and her husband*), the 4th Duke of Leinster (*brother of the second husband of an aunt*), the Marquis of Ormonde (*second cousin*), Sir Theodore Brinckman (*brother-in-law*), the Hon. Victor Churchill (*nephew*), Lord Londesborough (*first cousin*), the 8th Earl of Harrington (*eldest son of a first cousin of the widow*), Col. the Hon. Henry Byng (*representing the Queen*), Lord de Ros (*on behalf of the Royal Family*), Lord Alfred Paget (*mother's half-brother*), Lord Ventry (*heir's father-in-law*), Col. FitzGerald, Mr. Cecil Paget (*first cousin*), Major General Hankey, Mr. F. Sanders, Mr. Saville, Col. R. P. Laurie, Admiral Sir Reginald Macdonald, Mr. Charles Stewart Hardy (*of Chilham Castle; racehorse owner*), Colonel Billington, Captain Lambart, Captain Douglas, Mr. H. R. Peckham, Mr. William Henry Saltwell (*the family solicitor*), Mr. Robert Smith (*the land agent of the Bifrons and Minster estates and steward*), Mr. Osborne (*the agent of the Irish estates*) and others.

Captain and Adjutant Tynte and Captain Frewen of the Royal East Kent Yeomanry attended in uniform and a number of members of the D troop (of which the late Marquess was formerly Captain) were present. Canterbury, Ashford, Bridge and Wingham fire brigades were also represented. Nearly all the tenants on the Bifrons estate and the officers of the late marquess's yacht *Minerva* were present.

The funeral sermon on Sunday, June 11th, referred to the open vault with some sense of awe. It was mentioned that a few months before his death he was promoted to Lieutenant General in the army and he had said that he would have so

much more to give away as he regarded his professional income as his own earnings which he could give away to charity. He had served as one of Her Majesty's equerries.

His widow sought permission shortly afterwards to have the body transferred to a new plot to be provided by the Conynghams on the western side of the churchyard, north of the tree-lined path. This formed the nucleus of the group of graves which form a major feature in the churchyard today.

The family vault was covered over in 1885 when the Commissary General granted permission²³ for the level of the chancel to be raised. This task was accompanied by the removal of the reredos to the west end, the lowering of the children's seats, the placing of additional stalls in the chancel and the moving of the pulpit as far south as possible to open up the chancel arch.

CHAPTER TEN

The Conynghams after 1882

(a) **The 4th Marquess Conyngham (1882–1897)**

When Henry Francis, the 3rd Marquess, died in 1882, the Conynghams essentially vacated Bifrons and decided to rent it out to suitable tenants when they could be found.

We have an assessment of the revenue of the family estates in 1883. These were:-

9737 acres in Kent producing £17,431 *per annum*.

122300 acres in Co. Donegal producing £15,166 *per annum*.

27613 acres in Co. Clare producing £10,808 *per annum*.

7060 acres in Co. Meath producing £6,670 *per annum*.

In total 166,718 acres produced £50,076 *per annum*. The importance of the Bifrons and Minster estates as the highest revenue earners can thus be seen, even though Slane Castle remained the principal residence of the Marquess.

The 4th Marquess had married Frances Elizabeth Sarah Blakeney Eveleigh de Moleyns, the eldest daughter of Dayrolles Blakeney Eveleigh de Moleyns, 4th Baron Ventry, on March 21st, 1882, less than three months before succeeding his father. Their first son, Victor George Henry Francis, was born on January 30th 1883 in Charles Street (off Berkeley Square) and baptised in Patricbourne on March 17th that same year. The Queen was a sponsor by proxy at the baptism.

The 4th Marquess died in Slane Castle after a short illness at the early age of 39 on 28th August, 1897, leaving seven young children. He was buried in the Church of Ireland (Anglican) cemetery at Slane. His will was proved at £19,755 net.

(b) **The Trustees of the 5th Marquess (1897–1904)**

As the eldest child of the 4th Marquess, Victor George Henry Francis succeeded to the Marquessate. Since he was only 14 years of age, the estates were entrusted to Sir Theodore Henry

Brinckman of 34, Grosvenor Street, London, who was the husband of the 4th Marquess's late cousin, Cecilia Augusta, and the Member of Parliament for Canterbury from 1868 to 1874, together with the family solicitor, William Henry Saltwell of Messrs. Saltwell & Co.

(c) **The 5th Marquess Conyngham (1904–1918)**

The 5th Marquess took over the estates on his 21st birthday, January 30th, 1904.

(d) **The Trustees of the Will of the 5th Marquess**

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Conynghams' Tenants

(a) Edward Wienholt

Edward Wienholt was born in Laugharne, Carmarthenshire, on March 28th, 1833, to John Birkett Wienholt and his second wife, Sarah (*née* Hill).

The first European to arrive in the Darling Downs region of what was to become South-East Queensland was Henry Dennis who set up Jondaryan Station in 1842.

Edward Wienholt was the Representative for Western Downs in the Queensland Parliament from September 14th, 1870 to November 4th, 1873 when the constituency was split up: he continued as the Representative for Darling Downs until February 1st, 1875.

A Weinholt family arrived at Fremantle, Australia, in the ship *Assam* in March 1877. The family consisted of a husband and wife with an infant and two servants and another Mr. Weinholt.

It is known that an E. Weinholt was a main shareholder in the Central Queensland Meat Exporting Company and a "wealthy Victorian pastoralist".

On the night of April 5th, 1891, it was recorded in the census that Bifrons was occupied by an Ellen Wienholt, wife, age 34, living on her own means, born in Melbourne with her children Muriel Wendelina (age 15, born in Llanwern, Monmouthshire), Arnold (age 13; scholar; born in Goomburra, Queensland), Brenda and Mary Magdalena. (both born in Goomburra) and sons Edward Arthur (age 7, born in Goomburra) and William Humphrey Meyrick (age 5, born in Kingstone, Herefordshire). Also present were a cousin, John M. O. Bode, born in Newcastle, New South Wales, age 21 and occupied as a student of theology; a governess, Elizabeth Schipploch, born in Pomerania and aged 30 and a professor of music, Carl Deichmann, who was born in Hannover 63 years previously and was a visitor. The servants in residence were the butler, John Bayley, the housekeeper, Elizabeth McCraig and

the Head Bursar, Mary A. Lodge, all aged 36; the Lady's Maid, Lucy Derry, aged 35; three housemaids, Fanny Smith (aged 31), Annie M. Luet (aged 22) and Edith F. Eldridge (aged 15); the kitchenmaid, Ellen Heath (aged 22); the dairymaid, Susanna Lynces (aged 40); the tutor in French, Mlle. Rosa Cuendet of Switzerland, aged 21; the footman, Edward G. Gard (aged 19), the hallboy, Frederick J. Webb (aged 16) and the scullerymaid, Esther Barnet (aged 18).

The Queenslander reported on October 28th, 1893, that Mr. Edward "Weinholt" had left on the 23rd by the mail train to join the French mail steamer *Le Polynésien* at Sydney, *en route* for England to rejoin his family. *Le Polynésien* was a twin-funnelled steamer, 152 metres long and displacing 10,300 tons. It was capable of 17.5 knots and could take 172 passengers in first-class, 71 in second class, 109 in third class and 234 *rationnaires*.

An Arnold Wienholt (1877-1940) was an extraordinary adventurer about whom a book was written in 1987.

An Arnold Wienholt was a member of the Fourth Queensland Contingent (the Queensland Imperial Bushmen) who left for the Boer War on May 18th, 1900, was promoted to Sergeant on June 1st and returned on August 5th, 1901.

A Lieutenant Frederick Edward Wienholt of D Squadron, Central District, 7th Battalion, Australian Commonwealth Horse (Queensland) is recorded as having departed Australia on May 19th, 1902 and returned on August 2nd the same year as a member of the Tenth Queensland Contingent.

(b) John Miller

John Alexander Miller was born on September 27th, 1867 as the son of William Miller, a merchant of Leith who became the Liberal Member of Parliament for Leith Burghs and later for Berwickshire. His mother, Mary Anne *née* Farley Leith, was the daughter of John Farley Leith, Q.C., M.P. It is said that Gladstone created the baronetcy in 1874 in recognition of this marriage.

John was the younger brother of James Percy Miller who became the second baronet in 1887 and, as owner of Manderston House, Berwickshire, was responsible for the opulent rebuilding of that house in 1903–1905.

In 1889, John married Inez Mitchell-Innes, the eldest daughter of Captain William Mitchell-Innes of the 13th Hussars, and their residence in 1890 was in Barney Hill, Dunbar. The tenancy agreement for Bifrons is dated 1892.

Both brothers were interested in racehorses and John's first venture as an owner was to build in 1892 a model training establishment at Steep Lane, Findon, Sussex, known as the Nepcote Lodge stables. His racing colours were olive green with white hooped sleeves and quartered caps. He engaged the local artist and fellow Scotsman, Edwin Douglas (1848–1914), to paint his horses. He is known to have accommodated horses belonging to the Prince of Wales at his racing yard stables. His success on the turf was in much part due to engaging William J. Halsey as trainer and jockey. He did not, however, race on the same scale or with such success as his brother who had at some time won most of the classic races including the Derby in both 1890 and 1903. Nevertheless, he had a useful horse called "Bridge" who won a number of races over a long period.

His solicitor was Mr. Hugh Murray, Writer to the Signet, of 48, Castle Street, Edinburgh. Although his first lease has probably not survived, an amended version dated 2nd February 1897, was with Henry Francis, 4th Marquess Conyngham, and was to expire on June 20th, 1901. Its provisions are somewhat illuminating: there was a Still Room containing one locked cupboard and a Lumber Room. The lease stipulated that no sale, bazaar or public meeting was to be

held on the premises and, further, that the gamekeepers together with the Head and other gardeners were to be retained as well as the wild fowl on the lake. The lessor allowed the lessee the use of a mule for pumping purposes and the lessee could keep the fruit grown in the orchards. However, no grazing rights were included.

The rent consisted of £600 *per annum* for the mansion plus £250 for the household goods, furniture, glasses, books and other articles.

John sold the Nepcote Lodge Stables “at the turn of the century” to Eliza Charlotte Thirlwell for £5000 and high-grade training continued there. John moved on to the Michelgrove Stables nearby which were larger and occupying land formerly owned by Sir John Shelley, 9th baronet of Michelgrove. Although it has been alleged that Sir John was related to the poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley, the reality was actually quite different — they were 10th cousins, once removed!

1901 was a memorable year for John Miller: his first wife divorced him; he left Bifrons and he married Ada Mary Paget, the only child of Francis Henry Paget of Birstall, Leicester. It appears from a schedule of rents received by the Bifrons Estate that John continued to rent a property in the village for £6.10s. per year — the same rent as the vicar was paying for the vicarage — but it is not clear which property this was.

When his brother died on January 22nd, 1906, John succeeded to the baronetcy of Manderston. While his sister-in-law continued living at Manderston, John took over his brother's racing colours as second colours to his own as they were associated with such notable success. He divorced his second wife in 1906 and in 1907 married Eveline Frances Cookson, the eldest daughter of John Blencowe Cookson, C.B., of Meldon Park, Morpeth.

As he had no children by any of his three marriages, the baronetcy became extinct on February 16th, 1918, when John himself died at his home — Alexander House, Newmarket. In spite of his love of racing he had not been seen on a racecourse in his last few years which made his appearance at the Newmarket Fifth Extra Meeting, looking obviously ill, all the

more remarkable. He was buried in Newmarket cemetery following a service at which the Turf was represented by Mr. Richard Marsh, the King's trainer.

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missing
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(c) Frank Penn

The Penn family lived in a large corner house on the south side of Blackheath Road with a garden alongside the present Lewisham Road back to Cold Bath Lane (now known as John Penn Street). Five other properties separated them from their factory to the west which only had a frontage onto Cold Bath Lane. The firm had been started in 1799 by John Penn, a Bristolian millwright, whose aim was to produce agricultural machinery. It became famous for the marine engines produced since 1825 and also for the marine boilers produced at Palmer's Payne Wharf, Deptford. When John Penn died in 1843 his son, who was also named John, took over. The factory had become world-famous by 1857 and underwent major expansion in the 1860s. In 1868 they built the first ever wind tunnel for the Aeronautical Society which was then based in Blackheath.

John Penn had three sons: William (born 29.8.1849), Frank (born 7.3.1851) and Alfred (born 6.1.1855). All three played cricket for Kent. Their sister, Isabella, married Frederick Stokes who was the eldest of another set of three brothers who all played in the Kent XI.

Frank Penn was most appreciated in cricketing circles for his first-class batsmanship. He began to play for Kent on May 31st, 1875 at Catford Bridge and made his début at Lord's in 1876 where he scored 44 and 35 runs for the M.C.C. in a match against Yorkshire. His ability was so recognised that he was picked for the Gentlemen *versus* Players match that year both at The Oval and at Lord's. His best year playing for Kent was 1877 when he scored 857 runs in 24 innings (three times not out). The highest of his many big scores for Kent was the 160 scored in a match against Surrey at Maidstone on July 29th, 1878. That winter he went to Australia as a member of Lord Harris's team. It was also his privilege to play cricket for England in the Test Match against Australia at The Oval on 6th–8th September, 1880. Penn got 23 runs in the first innings and 27 runs not out in the second. It was his final hit, which gave England victory by 5 wickets. The team included the legendary W. G. Grace, who got 152 runs in the first innings and 9 runs not out in the second. Also playing for England were E. M. Grace and G. F. Grace making this the first instance

of three brothers playing in the same Test. This match was regarded as the first Test played in England — others had been held abroad.

Penn developed a heart condition during the 1881 season, which precluded him from running, and so his cricketing career was suddenly ended.

He served as President of the Kent County Cricket Club for the year 1905.

(d) Bob Marsham

Robert Henry Bullock Marsham was born in Merton College, Oxford, on September 3rd, 1833. His father, Robert Bullock-Marsham, had been Warden of the college since 1826 and had married his mother, Janet (known as “Jessie”), in 1828. She was the widow of Sir John Carmichael-Anstruther, Bart., the Member of Parliament for ???? and the daughter of Major-General David Dewar of Gilston House, Fife. Bob was their second son. He had private tuition at home and, naturally enough, received his university education at Merton College where he gained his B.A. in 1855 and M.A. in 1858. Like his father he followed the legal profession to become a magistrate; he won a studentship to the Inner Temple when aged only 24 and was called to the Bar in 1860.

These early days were interspersed with a certain amount of cricket. He played for Oxford University in 1856; Cambridge beat his side by 3 wickets and he never played in the Oxford XI again. However, he was chosen to play for the Gentlemen against the Players at Lord’s in both 1859 and 1860. In 1862 he played for the Gentlemen under 30 against the Players under 30 and got his best score, 24 runs, when he opened the Gentlemen’s first innings with E. M. Grace. I should add that the Players won all three matches very easily.

His bowling led the Middlesex Cricket Club to victory by 119 runs against the Surrey Cricket Club at Lord’s in July 1859 even though Middlesex were the weaker team.

In 1860 he was chosen to play for England against Kent at Canterbury. He made numerous runs for I Zingari and played in the double-tie match against Cranbury Park in 1864.

Professionally he joined the South-Eastern Circuit and from 1868 was Recorder of Maidstone. He married Laura Field of Ashurst Park, Kent, in 1871. He moved from Kent in 1879 on appointment as a Metropolitan Police Magistrate. At first he worked in the Greenwich and Woolwich courts. In 1897 he transferred to Westminster and finally in 1899 to Bow Street where he rose to be the second most senior magistrate.

At Bow Street on August 29th, 1910, he had the high-profile job of remanding that notorious American dentist, "Dr." Hawley Harvey Crippen, and his shorthand-typist, Ethel Clara Le Neve, into custody at Brixton and Holloway prisons, respectively, to await trial for the murder of Mrs. Crippen.

Mr. Marsham continued to sit at Bow Street until March 28th, 1913, after which he suffered from an attack of bronchitis which led to his death at Bifrons on April 5th. Two important cases which he had been adjudicating had to be formally adjourned.

His body was transported to Canterbury East station and thence to Victoria by train accompanied by his sons Charles and Robert four days later for the funeral service at St. Mary's, Bryanston Square, that same day. He was interred in Kensal Green Cemetery.

(e) Frank Penn's second tenancy

After Bob Marsham's death, Frank Penn returned to Bifrons. He had moved to Hardres Court, Upper Hardres, when its owner, George Marshall, J.P. moved to Juniper Rough in 1909 or 1910. He concluded an agreement with the Conyngham Estate for the provision of an electricity supply.

Penn died at Bifrons on December 26th, 1916, and was survived by his second wife, Ethel, his son, Frank, and three daughters. At 1.15 p.m. on December 30th, his fumed-oak coffin was taken from the mansion on a wheeled bier through the private grounds and the iron gate in the churchyard, to the church for the funeral. The Rev. Hubert Knight conducted the service and was assisted by some members of the Canterbury Cathedral Choir including Mr. W. T. Harvey, the assistant organist at the cathedral. There were many floral tributes and

wreaths including one from the Kent County Cricket Club. The grave was lined with flowers by the Head Gardener of Bifrons.

(f) Major Frank Penn

The tenancy was taken over by his son who was also named Frank and who I shall refer to as Major Frank Penn in recognition of the grade he attained in the Army and to distinguish him from his father. He had played cricket for Kent in three matches in 1904 and 1905, this latter year being that in which his father was President. He played for the Household Brigade against the Royal Artillery in 1906 and scored innings of 101 and 123 not out.

When the tenancy agreement of Bifrons came up for renewal in 1918, Major Frank Penn was uncertain about whether he wanted a long lease and settled for a lease of one year commencing June 24th, 1918. The rent was just £200 for the mansion and grounds and £350 for the shooting rights and use of the household goods. The tenancy agreement differed from earlier ones in that provision had to be made for wartime disruption of the normal life of Bifrons. Thus the agreement about the game started "... exclusive right, subject to the provisions of the Good Game Acts 1880 and 1906) of hunting, shooting, fishing and coursing over and upon that part of the Bifrons Estate in the said County of Kent and containing 3791 acres 1 rood 5 perches or thereabouts which is specified or referred to in the schedule hereto". However, it continued: "At his own expense to keep and feed in a proper and customary manner, so far as the present or any future restrictions imposed by the Food Controller or other official will permit, all game in and upon the said lands mentioned, or referred to, in the said schedule hereto and to preserve the same from being killed or destroyed by unauthorised persons or by vermin and at the expiration of the said term to leave the same premises stocked with game as near as may be equal to the existing stock (but in any case there shall be not less than 50 hen pheasants left in the pens) and to keep indemnified the landlord from all claims and demands of or by the landlords, tenants or any of them or any other person for or in respect of any loss or damage occasioned or arising from the keeping or preserving of game in accordance

with the provisions of Section 10 of the Agricultural Holdings Act 1908 and especially shall the tenant keep down the stock of rabbits so as to prevent them, as far as possible, from becoming injurious at any time to the woods and underwood of the landlord or the crops of his tenants”.

One must assume that Major Frank Penn left at the end of this tenancy and the house remained unoccupied for nine months until new tenants were found.

(g) Colonel the Hon. Milo Talbot and Mrs. Talbot

The Honorable Milo George Talbot was born on September 14th, 1854 as the fourth son of James Talbot, 4th Baron Talbot de Malahide, and his wife, Maria Margareta (*née* Murray). His oldest brother, Richard Wogan Talbot, became the 5th Baron in 1883. Milo was educated at Wellington College and subsequently had a very distinguished career in the Army. From 1877-1878 he served in the Jowaki Afridi expedition to India for which he was awarded a medal with clasp; he entered the Royal Engineers in 1878 and during the Second Afghan War of 1879-1880 he was mentioned in despatches and was awarded a medal with four clasps and a bronze decoration. In 1881, he was a member of the Mahsud Waziri Expedition. From 1897-1899 he was Deputy-Assistant-Adjutant-General at the headquarters of the Nile Expedition and was rewarded with a British medal and an Egyptian medal with three clasps. He became Director of the Sudan Surveys in 1900 and retired in 1905.

In 1911 he married Eva Joicey, the younger daughter of Colonel John Joicey of Newton Hall, Northumberland, who had been the Member of Parliament for Chester-le-Street(?), a Deputy Lieutenant for the county and a Justice of the Peace and had died in 1881. Their eldest son, Milo John Reginald, was born in 1912.

The Talbots were living at Hartham Park, Corsham, Wiltshire when they agreed to lease Bifrons for two years from 1st April 1920 for £1000 per year payable by instalments on April 1st and October 1st. On 30th December 1921, they signed* the lease to rent Bifrons mansion for a further seven years with the possibility of leaving after 3 or 5 years. The details of the lease are quite revealing: the properties leased were the "mansion house, dairy, laundry, cottage, stables, coach-houses, offices, gardens, gardener's house, hot-houses, greenhouses, pleasure grounds and one of the cottages numbered 23 on the plan [*i.e.* Upper Lodge] at present occupied by the gardener containing in the whole 20 acres or thereabouts". In the Smoking Room there were two small

* The witness to Col. Talbot's signature was David Robertson, Butler of Bifrons.

bookcases and four cupboards with uniforms. Other occupied cupboards included one in the Library and one under the Billiard Room stairs. A whole room over the Stables remained similarly occupied. The lessees were required to contribute 15s. per week to employ one Head Gardener and three under-gardeners.

(d) Mr. Blunt's death and funeral

Tragedy struck the Bifrons and Minster Estates when Mr. Blunt caught a chill as a result of a walk in Whitehill Wood²⁴ on 18th March, 1927. He died of pneumonia five days later at his home, "The Old Parsonage", Ospringe, and the funeral service was concelebrated in Patricbourne Church on the 27th by the resident vicar, the Rev. Hubert Knight, and Mr. Blunt's local vicar, the Rev. C. F. Hodges²⁵. In the eulogy, it was pointed out what a much-loved and kindly Englishman he was. Amongst the large congregation were his sister, Miss Blunt, his brother, Colonel Blunt, his nephew Colonel Sheepshank and Miss Sheepshank, his sister-in-law Mrs Fair with Colonel Fair, Mrs Kenrick, Mrs Jupp, Mr. Blencowe, the Talbots and Major and Mrs. Gordon Home. The Bifrons Head Gardener, Mr. A. Kitt, who was also a churchwarden, had lined the grave with ivy. Mr. Blunt was buried just in front of the Conyngham graves in the churchyard and a fine, horizontal, granite prism serves as a gravestone.*

Walter R. Elgar, Senior Partner of G. Webb & Co., Land Agents, Surveyors & Auctioneers, of 43 Park Road, Sittingbourne, was appointed to manage the estates for an annual salary of £350. This represented a considerable saving on Mr. Blunt's terminal salary of £600 *per annum* plus £30 car allowance plus journeys and expenses of approximately £42 *per annum*.

At meetings of the Trustees on 26th and 27th June, 1927 attended by the Dowager Marchioness and Mr. Saltwell, it was reported that Mr. Elgar had endeavoured to arrange for Col. Talbot to continue his lease and at the meeting on 18th July

* His second wife, Alice Ruth, died on September 4th, 1948, and is buried with him.

1928 it was reported that Mr. Elgar had written to say that the Talbots were indeed desirous of renewing their lease.

The lease was duly renewed* on 9th January, 1929, for a further seven years from 1st April, 1929, at the same rent and with the possibility of termination by the lessee after three or five years. However, it was noted that there were now cracks in the walls and floors which had given trouble. J. Elvy & Co. were brought in to repair the coping and the walls of the front wing and to coat these with Szerelmey liquid — an early form of damp-proofing treatment — for £31.10s. while “general interior and other repairs” in the same half-year cost a further £88.16s.11d.

Colonel Talbot died at Bifrons on September 3rd, 1931 and his remains were removed to Malahide for the funeral.

By May 4th, 1934, Mrs Talbot and her daughter Rose evidently felt they had had enough of mourning and so it was announced in the “Court Circular” column of *The Times* that they had arrived at 24, Cadogan Place, from Bifrons. This removal was not, however, permanent as from April 25th, 1935, the public were admitted to the gardens at Bifrons on certain Thursdays on payment of a shilling in aid of the Queen’s Institute of District Nursing.

Details of Mrs. Talbot’s domestic establishment were recorded in an interview in October 1988 between Tim Allen of the Canterbury Archæological Trust and Miss Joan Carpenter of The Green, Patricbourne. Joan had started work in 1937 at the age of 14 as a scullerymaid and continued there until 1940 when Mrs. Talbot had to move. Miss Carpenter related that there were ten indoor servants (the butler, the footman, the hallboy, the housekeeper, two parlourmaids, the cook, two kitchenmaids and the lady’s maid) and eleven outdoor servants (six gardeners, the groom, a stable boy, the chauffeur and two laundrymaids). The indoor staff lived and worked in the basement and access to the bedrooms in the attic was gained by the back stairs. The kitchen was connected by a stair directly to a servery for the dining room. The function of each of the

* Colonel Talbot’s signature was witnessed by his elder brother, Reginald (Gilbert Murray) Talbot, a barrister-at-law of 32, St. George’s Road, London.

rooms in the semi-basement was also recorded in this interview. There was an outside larder for storing game, fish and Welsh mutton; an inner larder, a kitchen staff room, the scullery, the kitchen, the linen room, the butler's pantry, the brushing room for polishing boots and shoes, the footman and hallboy's bedroom, the housekeeper and cook's room, the housemaid's sitting room, the servants' hall, a toilet, a water-tank room containing a large tank for softening water, a boiler room which had two other rooms associated with it and a store room.

After Bifrons was requisitioned for military use in 1940, Mrs Talbot moved to Froyle Place^{*}, near Alton.

During the war Bifrons was used as a transit camp for soldiers and displaced persons from continental Europe. It was allowed to fall into a bad state of repair. The wooden panelling was used for firewood. Rubble found beneath the floor during the archæological investigation in 1988-1989 included some NAAFI[†] cups dated 1942 and 1943.

^{*} Now Gasston House of the Lord Mayor Treloar (hospital) School.

[†] NAAFI was a well-known abbreviation for the Navy, Army and Air Force Institute.

(n) The future

Bifrons Park was declared a Conservation Area on January 30th, 1995, and was measured as 123.90 hectares (=306.16 acres). This was in quick succession to the declaration of the Patixbourne Conservation Area of 15.31 hectares (=37.83 acres) which was declared on November 8th, 1994.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Bifrons Chattels

(a) The heirlooms

The recorded chattels of Bifrons essentially date back to the Conyngham period. Jewellery and silver plate feature strongly.

According to the Will of the dowager Marchioness of Conyngham, she gave her son Albert (Lord Londesborough) any picture in her houses at Bifrons or Hamilton Place and to his wife any picture of Lord Albert in either house. [Silver] plates and plated articles, linen, china, furniture, the remaining pictures, statues, books and prints in both houses were to go to her son, Francis Nathaniel, the current Marquess. The diamonds were to go to him for his life and after his death to his son Lord Mountcharles for his life and after his death to whomsoever is Marquess Conyngham.

Much of the Bifrons silver was sold off after the death of Jane, widow of the 3rd Marquess Conyngham, by Christie's, Mann & Woods in their salerooms at 8, King Street, St. James' Square, on May 4th, 1908 and the three following days. Since Jane was wealthy in her own right by inheritance from the Harrington family, there is no reason to suppose that much of the silver being sold had been amassed by the Conynghams prior to their purchasing Bifrons. However, Lot 57 — a James I rosewater ewer and dish (90 ounces silver) — attracted a telling comment from the auctioneer: "A very similar dish is at Windsor Castle". It is more than probable that both dishes were together at Windsor Castle only 80 years before.

(b) The pictures

In the twentieth century the policy of selectively disposing of chattels to provide an income was continued. King George IV had instructed the President of the Royal Academy, Sir Thomas Lawrence (1769–1830), to paint two of the Conyngham daughters, Elizabeth (Henrietta) (who was born on February 16th, 1799 and on March 20th, 1826, became wife of the 10th

Marquess of Aboyne; she died on August 24th, 1839) and (Harriet) Maria (who was born in Ireland on July 2nd, 1810, married Sir William Meredyth Somerville, 5th Baronet in the Peerage of Ireland, on December 22nd, 1832 and died on December 3rd, 1843). These oil paintings had been valued by Messrs, Morant & Co, of 91, New Bond Street in August 1910 at £6000 each and had been insured for that amount with the Law Fire Insurance Society by a policy dated November 15th, 1910 in the name of the Marquess. The buyer was Joseph Duveen (1869–1939), an English art dealer who specialised in buying from English aristocrats* and selling to Americans. He wished to buy these portraits for £20,000 each and had put down a deposit of £200. With the exception of Lady Blanche the aunts of the Marquess, who were residuary legatees under the will of the dowager Marchioness, were now all married but the settlements executed on their respective marriages did not affect their shares of the residuary estate. To effect the sale, a handwritten bill was proposed to Parliament by the Marquess Conyngham.

The pictures were displayed in the Special Loan Exhibition of Old Masters of the British School which was held at the galleries of the Duveen brothers in 720 Fifth Avenue, New York, in January 1914.

* His usefulness was duly appreciated in 1933 when he was created 1st Baron Duveen of Millbank.

Appendix 1

The Conynghams before 1830

The history of the Conyngham family has been traced back to an 11th century family in Ayrshire and published by Playfair²⁶. For the purposes of understanding the 19th century position of the family in Ireland and Kent it will be sufficient to regard the "Big Bang" in Conyngham genealogy as commencing with Alexander Conyngham of Scotland who married Marian Murray, daughter of John Murray of Broughton, and produced 27 children of whom just 4 sons and 5 daughters survived infancy. They moved to Ireland and he became, in 1611, the first Protestant Minister of Enver and Killymard in Co. Donegal. In 1630 he became Dean of Raphoe and settled at Mountcharles on the coast of Co. Donegal where he leased an estate from the Earl of Annandale.*

Alexander died on September 3rd, 1660: his two most distinguished children were Katherine, who married Bishop John Leslie, and his eldest son, Albert, who married Margaret Leslie, daughter of the Rt. Rev. Henry Leslie, Bishop of Meath. Albert fought as a captain in Lord Mountjoy's Regiment of Foot for King William III in the Battle of the Boyne in 1660 and in December of that same year was appointed by letters patent Lieutenant-General for Ordnance in Ireland. He was duly rewarded with Slane Castle and its estate which had been forfeited by Lord Slane after the 1641 rebellion. He was present at the Siege of Limerick in 1691. When he was killed by rapparees near Colooney in Co. Sligo, his only surviving son was Henry who followed a similar military career.

However, Henry also became a politician, being M.P. for Killybegs in 1692 and for Donegal in 1695 and 1703. On December 9th, 1696, he married Mary Petty, the widow of Charles Petty, Baron Shelburne, and daughter of Sir John

* The documents relating to the leasehold interests of the Conynghams in the Murray of Broughton estates in Donegal are in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast. (Reference: D/2860).

Williams of Carmarthenshire, the 2nd baronet of Minster Court, Thanet. In this way, the Minster estate came into the possession of the Conyngham family. In 1699 he leased the 14 ballyboes* of Church of Ireland land in the parish of Killybegs from the Bishop of Raphoe. On January 1st, 1704, he was appointed Major-General. He was sent to Portugal and, in the War of The Spanish Succession, he was Governor of Lérida (now known by the Catalan equivalent, Lleida) fighting for the King of Spain. In a battle on January 26th, 170⁵/₆ against a relatively large number of Frenchmen a few miles across the Aragonese border at San Esteban de Litera he suffered a severe abdominal wound. He was taken back to Balagués in Catalonia where he died ten days later. His body was buried in the town walls.

Henry and Mary had had three sons and three daughters: the elder son, William, died in 1738 by which time the younger son, Henry, who was born in 1705, was in his second year as Member of Parliament, a post which he retained until 1753. This Henry was created 1st Viscount Conyngham on July 20th, 1756, and 1st Baron and 1st Earl Conyngham in 1781. In December 1744, he had married Ellen Merrett, the daughter and heir of Sir Solomon Merrett, a merchant of Hart Street in St. Olave's parish and his wife, Rebecca Savage. However, they had no children and so, when Henry died in 1781, the Minster estate passed to the inheritors of his sibling, Mary, who had died on March 20th, 1743. Her widower, the Rt. Hon. Francis Burton of Buncraggy, Co. Clare, inherited the Conyngham estate but with the usual proviso that he change his name to Conyngham which he did by Royal Licence on May 3rd, 1781, just one month after his brother-in-law, Henry, had been buried in Slane church. Francis and Mary Burton had four children: the eldest son, Francis Pierpoint Burton, acquired not only the surname Conyngham in 1781 but also became the 2nd Baron Conyngham. He had married on March 19th, 1750, Elizabeth Clements, the daughter of the Rt. Hon. Nathaniel Clements, who was responsible for building Beau Park in Co. Meath, and his wife Hannah Gore who was the daughter of the

* A ballyboe of land is an area of land containing 120 acres of *usable* land. It may be divided into 3 sessiaghs or 4 carrows.

Dean of Co. Down and the sister of the 1st Earl of Leitrim. When the 2nd Baron died at Hot Wells, Bristol, on May 22nd, 1787, their eldest son, Henry, who had been born the elder of twin sons, in London on December 26th, 1766, became the 3rd Baron and it is in the last two years of this Conyngham's life that the family's connection with Bifrons begins.

However, the story gets more interesting before we reach Bifrons.

The Sumner affair

Charles Richard Sumner was an aspiring cleric when he met Henry Joseph Conyngham, Earl of Mountcharles, at Trinity College, Cambridge. He was four years older and in the position of offering tutoring. In the summer of 1814, he took Henry and his younger brother, Francis Nathaniel, on a trip through Flanders and the Rhine valley to Geneva where they unexpectedly met his old friend from Eton days, John Taylor Coleridge, nephew of the poet and philosopher Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who introduced them to Professor Jean-Pierre Maunoir, the distinguished ophthalmic surgeon, in Geneva who had an English wife. Interest developed in their eldest daughter, Jennie Fanny Barnabine Maunoir, to the extent that to prevent Henry from proposing marriage to her, Sumner himself got engaged to her in January 1815 and married her a year later. The Conyngham parents were so immensely grateful for this that they remained firm friends of Sumner and resolved to advance his career. After the Regent became King George IV in 1820, the Conynghams introduced Sumner to the King at Brighton where he dined and talked to George IV for three hours. Sumner's handsome presence, dignified manner and tact created a very favourable impression.

Lady Conyngham's influence over George IV was, to say the least, exceptional. Charles Greville²⁷, Clerk of the Council to both George IV and William IV, recorded on May 2nd, 1821 that when the Canonry of Windsor became vacant, Lady Conyngham had asked the King to give it to Mr. Sumner, a curate who had never even held a living. The King agreed and Mr. Sumner kissed his hands at The Royal Pavilion, Brighton. A letter was sent to Lord Liverpool, the Prime

Minister, informing him of this but it crossed with a letter from Lord Liverpool to the King in which the customary list of suitable persons was provided. Liverpool was simply furious: he took his carriage to Brighton immediately and threatened to resign if Sumner were appointed and if he could not retain the distribution of this patronage. The outcome was that Sumner's candidacy was withdrawn and Dr. James Stanier Clarke*, who could be tolerated, but not approved of, by Lord Liverpool, got the canonry instead. The twist was that Sumner could now give up the curacy of Highclere which he had held since September 1816 because he would be taking on all of the appointments which Clarke had previously held. These included the posts of historiographer to the Crown, chaplain to the household at Carlton House and Librarian to the King. In addition he was appointed private chaplain at Windsor on a salary of £300 per annum and given use of a capital house opposite the park gate.

The Duke of Wellington wrote to Lord Liverpool on October 26th, 1821, confiding to him that since the King had not forgiven him for his opposition to Mr. Sumner he had objected to the accession of George Canning to the government thereafter in retaliation and that although all of the Prime Minister's colleagues supported Lord Liverpool over this matter, they would all suffer with him.

Charles Sumner was with the Earl of Mountcharles when he died in Nice on December 27th, 1824, at the age of 29. He became Bishop of Winchester in 1827 at the age of 37 and only fell from grace with King George IV when he supported the Roman Catholic Emancipation Bill in 1829.†

* Clarke was already well known to the King as he had been used as a go-between to get Jane Austen to dedicate *Emma* to The Prince Regent even though she loathed him. However, Clarke then tried to get her to write a novel about a clergyman of his own type: she resisted with consummate wit and diplomacy.

† Henry Reeve, Registrar of the Privy Council, as editor of Greville's posthumously-published memoirs added that although Sumner's early advancement may have been questionable, his performance as Bishop of Winchester was excellent.

Perquisites

Greville went on to recount how Lady Conyngham and all the members of her family were supplied at their house in Marlborough Row (now Marlborough Place), Brighton, with horses and carriages from the King's stables.

Henry Conyngham was appointed Lord Steward of the Royal Household with effect from December 11th, 1821, a post which he held until July 15th, 1830. He, but not the Marchioness, was present at the death of King George IV in Windsor Castle on June 26th, 1830. The king's last words were "This is death".

Appendix 2

Lord Albert Conyngham

Lord Albert Conyngham was the third and youngest son of the 1st Marquess and Elizabeth Denison. He was born at 8, Stanhope Street, Piccadilly, on October 21st, 1805, and was educated at Eton from 1820. On September 21st of that year his name, with the rank of cornet, was placed on the half-pay list of the disbanded 22nd regiment of dragoons. On July 24th, 1823, he joined the Horse Guards but retired after 12 months. In May 1824 he entered the Diplomatic Service and was appointed Attaché at Berlin where he improved his knowledge of the German language. In May, 1825, he transferred to Vienna where he was similarly Attaché. In February, 1828, he became Secretary of the Legation at Florence and from January, 1829, until June 1831, was Secretary at Berlin.

King George IV created him Knight Commander of the Order of the Guelphs in 1829 and he was also named a Deputy-Lieutenant of the West Riding of Yorkshire.

In 1856 he was forced by ill-health to remain in his villa at Cannes and in the winter of 1859 he went to St. Leonards-on-Sea. He then removed to his London residence, 8 Carlton House Terrace — now part of the premises occupied by the Royal Society — where he died on January 15th, 1860. He was buried in the family vault at Grimston nine days later.

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