



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

# East Kent Diary

# French baron found peace at Bridge

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

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

After the war he returned to France but was so disgusted by the horrors of the French Revolution in 1789 that he fled to England in 1790 and married a woman

of Irish descent, Miss Anne McGeoghegan O'Neill.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 150 years

### Nobleman dies

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

(Kentish Gazette, July 19, 1824).