



Charles Louis Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu.

ANOTHER fascinating chapter in the strange tale of a French nobleman's life and death in Bridge has opened with the discovery of his will in London.

Charles de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, died at Bridge in 1824.

He was the grandson of the famous French philosopher and had fled to England after the horrors of the French Revolution.

The baron was born in 1749, 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 Revolution that he came to England in 1790.

He settled at Bridge Hill House, just off the main road near the present Highland Court.

Although he briefly went back to France after the restoration of Louis XVIII, he returned to Bridge and died here.

In his will, he left his estates to his godson in Ireland, but also remembered his servants and the Canterbury hospital.

The village's unofficial historian Mr John Williamson, who has been piecing together the baron's life and

times, says: "He left £100 to his coachman, the same amounts to his waggoner and to the Canterbury hospital."

Mr Williamson, of Beechmount, Conyngham Lane, says he has been given a copy of the will to add to the history he has on the village.

### Researcher

It was given to him by a London researcher who tracked it down in the Public Records Office.

Mr. Williamson has been researching the baron's life for many years.

In 1979 he welcomed to the village the baron's descendant, who lives at Chateau de Labreade, near Bordeaux. Two years ago Mr William-

son went to the moated chateau.

The baron, who was a Roman Catholic, is buried in Bridge churchyard.

Mr Williamson says it was unusual at that time for a person of the Catholic faith to be buried in a Protestant church.

Just as unusual is a commemorative plaque inside the church to the baron.

Another interesting fact revealed by the will is the restrictions it placed on the baron's family.

He asked to be buried in the parish church of the place where he died and ordered that his funeral should not cost more than £70, a great deal of money in those days.

# Will's historic legacy