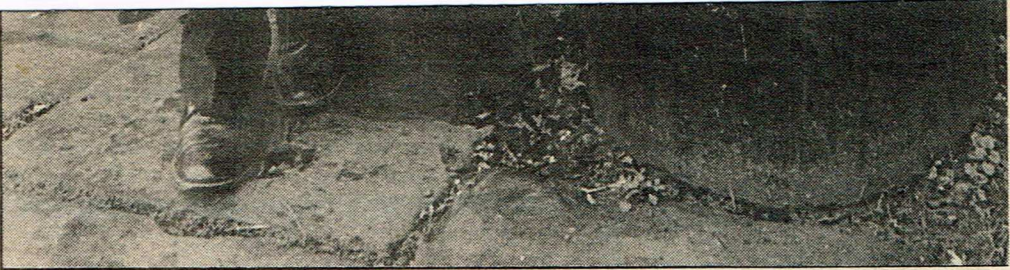




Bridge Postmaster Laurence Shirley outside the post office.



Bridge Postmaster Laurence Shirley outside the post office.

Laurence to hang up his rubber stamp

VILLAGE postmaster Laurence Shirley is to retire this month after 30 years in the job.

Laurence, 62, took over the job of postmaster in Bridge, after his father died suddenly following nine years service behind the post office counter himself.

Twenty years ago, he built the pharmacy that adjoins his quaint little post office but it's the restoration of old buildings that will fill the spare time of his retirement.

Mountain tops

The bug for such enterprises first bit Laurence when he was working for the Cheshire Foundation for the Sick and volunteered to build a hospice in the Himalayas.

In addition to hot-footing across the mountain tops, he has served in various capacities on the old Bridge Blean Urban District Council, which was absorbed by Canterbury City Council.

During his time with the Bridge council he was seen to champion the cause of the Bridge bypass development.

Laurence also served 16 years on the Kent County Council and was Deputy Traffic Commissioner for the Ministry of Transport for 6 years.

Laurence was also Conservative member for Canterbury South on Kent County Council.

Flint

He is married to well known Polar author and lecturer Ann Savours, who is a curator at Greenwich Maritime Museum and they have two sons John, 36, and Nicholas, 31.

Traditional jazz music and travel remain keen interests for Laurence, while his building restorations have included the Bridges oast houses and a flint cottage that is situated in the grounds of the post office.

Laurence said: "It is very difficult restoring an old building but it is also very satisfying.

"Most difficult of all to restore are windmills, which require a tremendous amount of research to take on."

Village stalwart retires

THE sub postmaster at Bridge has retired after 32 years in the business.

Laurence Shirley, of Mill Lane, took over at the village post office in 1966.

Then it was a single room, but the ex-builder extended the building at both front and rear and, 20 years ago, built the pharmacy next door.

In the last three decades, the former parish, district and county councillor has met thousands of people by being at the post office

and made many friends.

"People think it is all letters and pensions, but there is much more to it," he said.

His retirement has been prompted by the imminent departure of pharmacist Lesley Coates who is moving to Amersham, in Buckinghamshire, in June. They have sold the post office and pharmacy in the High Street as a joint business to Ian and Wendy Barrie.

Mr Barrie is a pharmacist and has also trained as a postmaster for the new role. His wife will also be working in both shops.

Mrs Coates will continue to work as a pharmacist at Littlebourne surgery until she moves.

And with time on his hands, Mr Shirley will be taking up his former profession as a hobby. He loves renovating old houses and is currently working on one for the homeless in Whitstable.



ALL CHANGE: Laurence Shirley (left) and Lesley Coates with new owner Ian Barrie at the Bridge shop 4A/0770/E

21/14/98.

Part of the city



TIM HOARE

A FORMER city councillor and Deputy Mayor of Canterbury, known for his community spirit, has died.

Tim Hoare, a member of the council between 1976 and 1987, was 86.

An active member of the community he lived in the Canterbury district nearly all his life and was the city's Deputy Mayor in 1981.

He was in the Royal British Legion and once president of Bridge Cricket Club and sang in the Church Choir.

He leaves a wife Muriel, two daughters and seven grand children. Paying tribute to her father, one of his daughters Pam Dice said: "He was always very public spirited, interested and involved in everything."

Mr Hoare worked in the construction industry and ran the local building firm J.Neaves and Son. He also served in Federation of Master Builders.

During the Second World War he served in the 8th Army with The Royal Engineers throughout the Middle East, Sicily and Italy and with the 2nd Army in Normandy and Germany.

He was decorated by the Dutch for helping to reclaim the island of Valcheren.

Mr Hoare was a Conservative councillor for North Nailbourne Ward, which takes in Bishopsbourne and Bridge, where he lived with his wife Muriel until suffering a stroke five years ago.

He became a resident of Harbledown Lodge and later Saxon Lodge at Bridge.

The funeral will be held on Tuesday at 11.45am at Bridge Church, followed by a private service at Barham.

Adam Barnard on an ancient estate with a deer park and shooting rights

Priory with a riotous past

THE writer, fighter and decadent MP, Somerset de Chair, had four wives, countless mistresses and a lifestyle worthy of one of Evelyn Waugh's young sparks. But his Essex estate, for all the flamboyance of its former owner, remains unsold.

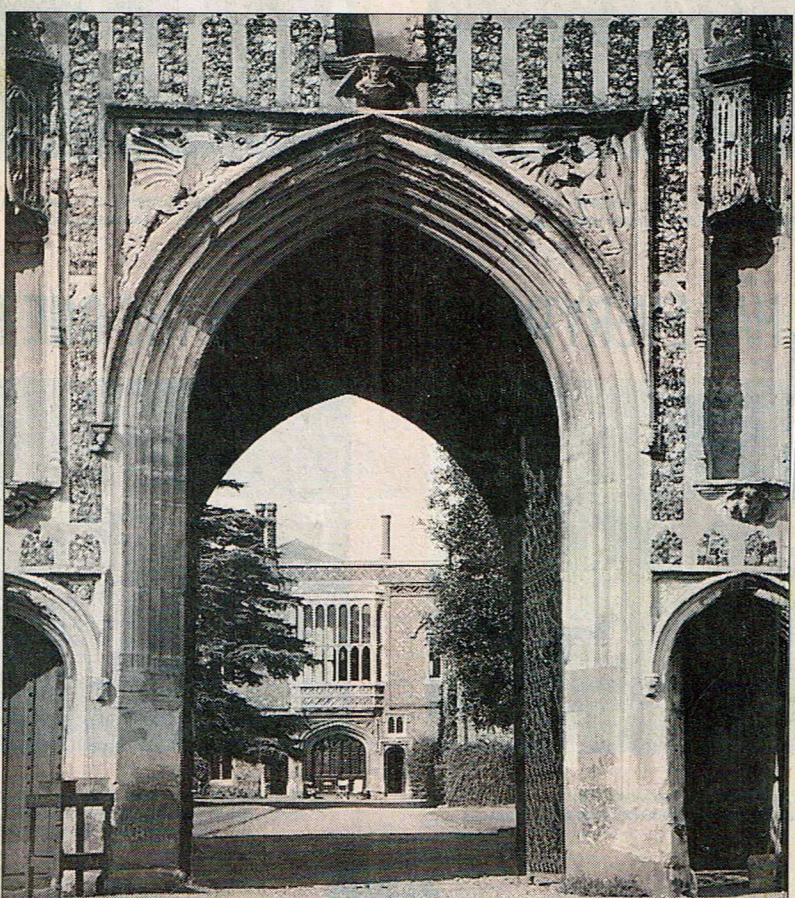
St Osyth Priory, 383 tranquil acres centred on a 13th-century chapel and a 16th-century tower, was put on the market a year ago. The estate agents Bidwells offered it in five lots with a guide price for the whole of £2.3 million. But 22 listed buildings, a deer park, formal gardens and shooting rights have failed to find a buyer.

The politician and philanderer, who died in 1995 aged 83, was said to have had two passions in his life — women and property. Before his death, he divided his time between St Osyth; Bourne Park, near Canterbury; a London home; and a colonial house near New York. He bought St Osyth, which is near Clacton-on-Sea in Essex, with his second wife in 1953 and embarked on a programme of restoration. By 1981, his art collection had grown too large for the priory and he and his wife (by then his fourth) acquired Bourne Park to house it.

Mr de Chair had a good start in life. His father — one of Sir John Jellicoe's admirals at the Battle of Jutland in 1916 and later Governor of New South Wales — gave him an annual income of £400 a year and an open-topped Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost. Visits to parties in London became a regular feature of his time at Balliol College.

He was also, however, a thinker who had two books published while at Oxford. He married Thelma Arbuthnot, also from a wealthy background, in 1932. His entry into the House of Commons in 1935 as Conservative MP for South West Norfolk came as little surprise.

With it came more parties and more temptation, and he embarked on a string of affairs, as well as twice-weekly visits to a brothel. In London he met Vivienne Wooley-Hart, a voracious American.



St Osyth Priory: 383 tranquil acres centred on a 13th-century chapel



Parties and politics: de Chair

Later, as a soldier in Palestine, he fell for "Louscha", a mysterious Slav of whom he wrote in a sonnet: "Alone to look on her, made men desire / And those who knew her felt a slumbering fire."

In 1950 Mr de Chair became MP for South Paddington but his innumerable liaisons proved his downfall. His mistress at the time, Carmen Appleton, became pregnant and his wife learnt about it, and

went public. He was forced to give up his seat — and more or less obliged to marry Miss Appleton.

A secluded country retreat must have seemed an attractive proposition for the couple, who moved to St Osyth in 1951. He remarried in 1958 and finally, in 1974, wed the former wife of the Marquess of Bristol.

Mr de Chair was already known for his love of property when he bought the priory for about £30,000. He had previously owned Chilham Castle in Kent and Trerice Manor in Cornwall. At St Osyth, he worked with Darcy Braddell, a well-known architect, to restore the Gate House, its principal residence. Mr Braddell was himself a feature of the priory's colourful history. His ancestor, Lord Darcy, acquired much of the land in 1550, adding to the priory, founded in

1121 by the Bishop of London. Lord Darcy built the Abbott's Tower, which has views over the entire estate, and the Great Hall, later destroyed by fire. Across the central lawns from the Gate House is the Darcy House, with its extravagant first-floor drawing room named in tribute to the family. The second Lord Darcy entertained Queen Elizabeth there.

Bidwells has recently relaunched the property and Jonathon Veale, from the agency, says it is generating great interest. He claims that the lack of a sale has been caused by problems with possible buyers. Mr Veale says: "We had some bogus buyers at the start. Then it was under offer for seven months, but the purchaser could not secure the funds."

Those unable to meet the £2.3 million price tag are most likely to consider the first lot, for which offers of more than £1.65 million are sought. It contains the main cluster of buildings, including, as well as the Gate House and Darcy House, a 13th-century chapel with medieval floor tiles, a vaulted ceiling and a stained-glass window depicting St Osyth, the virtuous abbess of a seventh-century nunnery.

● Bidwells, 01473-611 644

32 July 9, 1998

Peddalling Pyrenees pilgrim

by Claire Witherden

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RETIRED sea captain John Martin has journeyed to the end of the earth - by bicycle.

With a passport, tent and sleeping bag, he embarked on a 1,700-mile journey crossing France, the Pyrenees and Spain to Santiago Cathedral and Cabo Finisterre (the cape at the end of the earth) on the western coast.

He followed a medieval pilgrim route from Le Puy in France, called the Camino de Santiago, camping along the way for five weeks.

Mr Martin, 63, from Patrixbourne, said: "It was a great experience, fantastic views and a great sense of camaraderie. A trip like this is with you for the rest of your life.

"There are churches and cathedrals along the route and abandoned old pilgrim villages. The flowers were in bloom. It was very, very beautiful.

"It isn't on a tourist route, so I was seeing a genuine Spain. The people were kind. When they saw my scallop shell, which all pilgrims carry, on the

front of my bike they would give me little goodies to eat with my coffee.

"They went out of their way to help. I left my water bottle at a cafe, and the waiter came after me on his motorbike. That was just one of the kindnesses I encountered."

Although cycling 40-50 miles a day, he says he didn't have a single ache or pain and the only problems he encountered were two punctures, which were easily repaired, and cold, wet weather, which stopped after three days.

He said: "I kept imagining how pilgrims would have done it in the 12th century. How they would have got their water and how they would have coped."

He decided on the trip after meeting some pilgrims while walking the Pyrenees last year.

He said: "I've always had a bike, but this was my first long-distance trip. It would have taken two months to walk, and I didn't want to be away that long."

He says the worst part of the journey was from Patrixbourne to Newhaven.

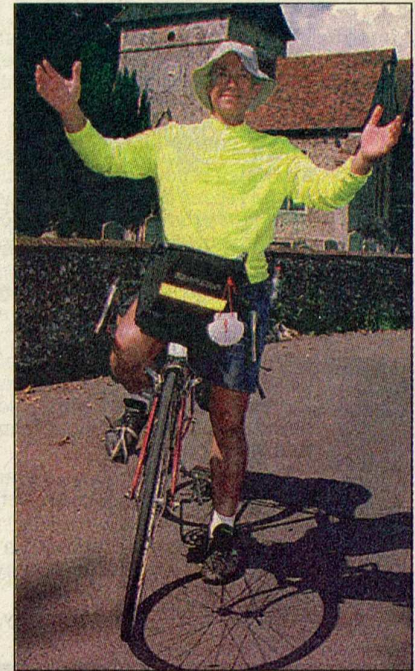
He said: "Because cycling's a national sport in France, motorists there and in Spain are much more considerate."

He had mixed feelings when he arrived at the cathedral: "I felt a terrific sense of achievement and elation, but also sadness that it was all over.

"When you get to the cathedral, you've got to give a reason why you did it. That troubled me a bit. What was I going to say?"

"A sense of adventure, wanting to practice my French, meet new people and see new places, but I eventually put down spiritual, because all these things are spiritual.

"It was quite an emotional time, and it will be a long time before it gets out of my sys-



END OF JOURNEY: John Martin back in Patrixbourne 2/2872E



tem."

He returned by coach to Bilbao and by ship to Portsmouth and set about collecting the £250 he's raised through sponsorship for Patrixbourne Church and the Pilgrims Hospice.

He said: "I chose those because I've lived in Patrixbourne since marrying in 1964. I also retired with a friend who, within three months, died of cancer."

Mr Martin, who retired from P&O four years ago, said: "I see no reason to stop doing things because I'm retired. I've got my next trip mapped out.

"I shall cycle from Bilbao along the northern coast of Spain to the west coast of Portugal, visiting all the historic sea ports from the time of Trafalgar and Nelson."



That summer Kay went on holiday. The car broke down and during the delay she met an RAF pilot. On her return she told Heath of her engagement



quited love: Heath and Kay Raven, left, were inseparable on the constituency circuit. But the year he became Bexley's MP she met and later married Richard Buckwell, centre. Heath found solace sailing

Heath tells of the sweetheart who jilted him for RAF pilot

by Nicholas Hellen and Chris Dignan

Their friendship blossomed in Broadstairs during the school holidays.

Friends say their first encounter came when "Teddy" was brought into the surgery of Kay's father, Dr Hugh Raven, after being knocked off his bike by a car. Heath's version comes in a discursive account of life in the small seaside town in the 1930s with his parents and younger brother, John.

"Perhaps our closest family friends at this time were the Ravens," he writes. "Martin and Hugh Raven, two brothers, were doctors and pillars of the local community ... I knew Hugh Raven's two daughters especially well, not least because they sang in Our Carol Party [local carollers whom the young Heath directed], together with their brother Tom. I also have vivid memories of singing madrigals with them around the dining table at their home.

"Margaret, one of the sisters, went out to Rhodesia many years ago and we still write to each other from time to time. My closest friend, however, was her sister Kay. She was a delightful girl and we shared many interests, includ-

ing tennis and swimming as well as music.

"Knowing each other in so many different ways, we corresponded frequently throughout the war, when I was moving around the country with the Royal Artillery Regiment and she was in the WAAF.

"After I returned home in 1946, we still remained separate because we were working in different parts of the country. One day she suddenly let me know that she was marrying someone else. I was saddened by this. I had been under such pressure, re-adapting myself to civil life and earning a living, that maybe I had taken too much for granted. I subsequently learnt that Kay had a happy life with her children, but we never met again."

Friends point out that the romance did not end until 1950. Heath had moved to London after the war, where he worked as a civil servant while seeking a political career. Although he went home only once every three or four weeks, friends say Kay loyally accompanied him to official dinners as he sought to capture a Conservative seat.

They say that with his nomination in 1947 as a parliamentary candidate for the Bexley constituency, Heath appeared anxious to advance their

relationship to a new level. A picture taken in 1949 at a dance for the Honourable Artillery Company at Armoury House shows a couple, no longer in the first flush of youth, gazing forward with a shared confidence.

In February 1950, Heath won Bexley with a majority of 133. By May he appeared sure that his many years of friendship with Kay carried the potential for a life-long bond. When asked by a close friend, George Chadd, about his plans for marriage, he replied: "We can see daylight."

That summer, however, Kay went on a caravanning holiday to Scotland with her cousin,

Pamela Hill. Their car broke down and during their enforced delay she met Flight Lieutenant Richard Buckwell, a veteran of wartime bombing raids over Germany.

According to one woman who knew him well: "He was a true, old-fashioned gentleman. Girls all loved him." Kay fell for him and, on her return to Kent, told Heath the news of her engagement.

The wedding went ahead on January 13, 1951, at Holy Trinity church, Broadstairs. Buckwell, at 32 a year older than his bride, wore his RAF uniform and sported a well-groomed moustache. Heath, 34 at the

time, was not among the guests. Subsequently, he has always explained his not marrying by saying "the right occasion never arose".

Hill said she was surprised to learn how hurt he had been. "I honestly didn't think there was, on her side, any romantic attachment," she said.

After the rebuff, Heath's political career advanced rapidly. He was in the cabinet by 1955, became Conservative leader in 1965 and was prime minister from 1970 to 1974.

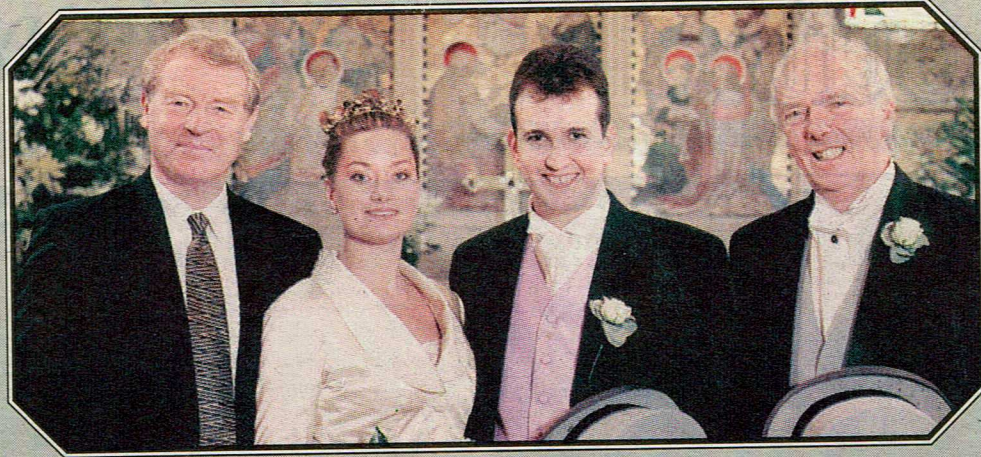
Kay settled into the life of a serviceman's wife. After her husband left the RAF in 1960, they took up farming, moving

eventually to Yocklett's Farm near Waltham, in east Kent. Heath regularly sent Christmas cards and she made a point of watching his speeches on television. When she died of cancer in 1978, he wrote a letter of condolence to her husband. She was buried at the church in which she had been married.

Could Kay have saved Heath from defeat in 1974? One family member believes she could. "Although she was a bit of a snob, she was a devoted wife who sacrificed her career for her husband. She would have blossomed at No 10."

Quidnunc, News Review, page

19. x. 98.



LIBERAL DEMOCRAT leader Paddy Ashdown was among guests at the wedding of Rebecca Vye and Nicholas South at Bishopsbourne church on Saturday. The bride, daughter of city council Liberal Democrat leader, Cllr Martin Vye (right), from Bridge, worked as personal assistant to Mr Ashdown for four years. She now works for a London bank. She met her husband while he was a speech writer for Mr Ashdown. The couple, who live in London, held their reception at the King's School and Broome Park and are honeymooning in Kenya.

Picture: Alfie and Trish Jarvis

Queen Mum ^{xi/93} chats to Norman

PROUD war veteran Norman Elgar was delighted when the Queen Mother stopped for a chat as he paid tribute to his old comrades.

Norman, 74, of Ford Close, Bridge, was on parade at the Field of Remembrance outside Westminster Abbey last week when she came over to him.

The old soldier was among friends from the Buffs tending the regimental plot when he was buttonholed by the Queen Mum.

He was wounded at Cassino in 1944 during the Italian campaign's most vicious battle as soldiers slithered through mud to take a commanding hill.

At the time, Norman was serving with the Royal West Kent Regiment after transferring from The Buffs.

"She came up to me and started talking. She said how nice it was that the old regiments were being remembered" he said.

The former postman fought his way through Sicily and Italy before his war finished at Cassino.

And he was on parade at the Centotaph on Sunday with many of his old comrades as they remembered their fallen friends.