

# Bifrons and Beyond

FEATURED

## Welcome

*Of all the great things that the English have invented and made part of the credit of the national character, the most perfect, the most characteristic, the only one that they have mastered completely in all its details so that it becomes a compendious illustration of their social genius and their manners, is the well-appointed, well-administered, well-filled country house.*

*Henry James (1879)*

The purpose of this site is to act as a repository for my research into the English Country House and related themes- specifically, to begin with at least, research focusing on the history of Bifrons Park, in Patixbourne, Kent.

Inevitably, I will go off focus and delve into related topics along the way. I hope to discover more about the impact of the 'Big House' on the social, economic and everyday life of villages along the Nailbourne. I hope to relate my research to other notable (and otherwise) buildings and individuals within the community.



Enjoy. Comments, hints and help always welcome.

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[OCTOBER 10, 2016](#) BY [LAURA KNOX](#)

## Robert Smith

**Born:** c.1834 – Kings Cliffe, Northamptonshire

Wife: Louisa

Son: George H.

1881 – Land Agent at Bifrons

*Census Returns of England and Wales, 1881.* Kew, Surrey, England: The National Archives of the UK (TNA): Public Record Office (PRO), 1881.

Class: RG11; Piece: 955; Folio: 6; Page: 5; GSU roll: 1341227

**Canterbury Journal, Kentish Times and Farmers' Gazette**, 16th Jul 1887

*The half yearly rent audit for the Marquess's estates at Bifrons and Minster was held at the Royal Fountain Hotel on Thursday. Mr W. H. Saltwell, the solicitor to he estates, attended, and Mt Robert Smith, the Marquess's agent and steward, was also present. In consequence of the continued depression in agriculture, 10 per cent of the rent was remitted. After the usual business had been transacted, the tenants sat down to a sumptuous dinner, admirably served by the proprietor, Mr H. Ward. Mr Saltwell presided, and Mr Smith occupied the vice-chair. The health of the Marquess and the Marchioness was drunk with great heartiness.*

1891 – Land Agent at Bifrons

*Census Returns of England and Wales, 1891.* Kew, Surrey, England: The National Archives of the UK (TNA): Public Record Office (PRO), 1891.

Class: RG12; Piece: 705; Folio: 4; Page: 1; GSU roll: 6095815



*A once familiar figure in agricultural circles in East Kent, and especillay in the neighbourhood of Canterbury and in the Isle of Thanet, has passed away this week is th person of Mr Robert Smith, who was for many years the agent and steward to the two late Marquesses Conyngham. Mr Smith retired from that position four or five years ago and went to live at New Malden in Surrey, where his death occurred on Monday after a short but incurable illness. He was sixty three years of age. He leaves a widow and one son – their only child.*

*The deceased served as a young man in the Life Guards, in which regiment Lord Mount Charles, afterwards Marquess Conyngham (the father of the late Marquess), was at the same time an officer. His Lordship took a particular likeness for Robert Smith, and some years later bought him out of the army, and made him his confidential servant. At that time, Lord Mount Charles was residing at Bridge Place near Canterbury.*

*Subsequently Mr Smith was promoted to a higher position in the family of the Marquess and Marchioness at Bifrons, and on the death of Mr Herbert Pilcher, he was appointed to succeed him as agent and steward of the Bifrons and Minster Estates. Had Mr Pilcher lived, Mr Smith would have gone to Slane Castle to fill the stewardship of the Irish Estates of the Marquess Conyngham, having in fact been appointed to that post just previous to Mr Pilcher's death. When that event occurred Lord Conyngham asked Mr Smith to take over the duties which Mr Pilcher had for so many years carried out.*

*The Conyngham family held the deceased in the highest respect, and he enjoyed their fullest confidence. Among the tenantry he was looked upon as a perfectly fair-minded and most sympathetic landlord's agent. For many years he was Captain of the Bridge Fire Brigade, and a member of the Royal East Kent Mounted Rifles. During the many years he resided at Bifrons Cottage he filed several parochial offices and was churchwarden of Patrixbourne.*

*Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald, 24th Sep 1898*

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## Herbert Edward Pilcher (1842-1877)

### **Born**

25 August 1842

Father – Richard Pilcher (Royal Mint)

Mother – Rebecca Curtis

General Register Office. *England and Wales Civil Registration Indexes*. London, England: General Register Office. © Crown copyright. Published by permission of the Controller of HMSO and the Office for National Statistics. You must not copy on, transfer or reproduce records without the prior permission of ONS. Database Copyright © 1998-2003 Graham Hart, Ben Laurie, Camilla von Massenbach and David Mayall.

### **Baptised**

4 November 1843

London Metropolitan Archives, Newington Holy Trinity, Register of Baptism, p92/tri, Item 006

### **Married**

Fanny Mead – Q4 1867 (Blean) Index No: 2a 1213

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## Events

1851 – Scholar (Resident Camberwell)

*Census Returns of England and Wales, 1851*. Kew, Surrey, England: The National Archives of the UK (TNA): Public Record Office (PRO), 1851. Data imaged from the National Archives, London, England. The National Archives gives no warranty as to the accuracy, completeness or fitness for the purpose of the information provided. Images may be used only for purposes of research, private study or education. Applications for any other use should be made to the National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DU.

1871 – Land Agent (Bifrons)

## Death

15 October 1877

**Kent & Sussex Courier**, 17th Oct 1877

*On Monday evening, at Bifrons Cottage, near Canterbury, Mr Herbert Edward Pilcher, land steward for the estates in Kent of the late and present Marquis Conyngham, died after a very short illness. He was deservedly popular among the landowners and tenantry of the Eastern division of the county. He leaves a wife and young family.*

## Will

Effects under £1,500

The Will of Herbert Edward Pilcher late of the Parish of Patricbourne in the County of Kent Land Agent who died 15 October 1877 at Patricbourne was proved by Fanny Pilcher of Patricbourne Widow the Relict the sole Executrix.

Principal Probate Registry. *Calendar of the Grants of Probate and Letters of Administration made in the Probate Registries of the High Court of Justice in England*. London, England © Crown copyright.

## Burial

Patricbourne 19 October 1877

Frank Watt Tyler. *The Tyler Collection*. Canterbury, Kent, England: The Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies.

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## Trust me, I'm a Land Steward...



*As the master cannot live without the steward, or the steward without the master, there is nothing of greater importance than, that a good understanding subsists: to ensure which, an adequate salary is highly conducive to the interest of the master; the steward being the mainspring between the landlord and tenant, master and servant, too much attention cannot be paid in the first place, to the choice of him, and to the regulating and fixing of his salary.*

*Anon (1822)*

This extract is from an anonymous text, reportedly by a serving land steward (Faversham) in 1822. The main theme of the extract deals with the key relationship between landowner and steward, and thereafter how this relationship affects that between steward and tenant. The author infers a link between salary and performance. (hahaha – remember all those painful performance appraisal reviews? – they go way back).

*“In the later 17th century and early 18th century landowners began to employ land stewards to supervise their estates during long periods of absence. These stewards became a highly professional group during the 18th and 19th centuries and were instrumental in the spread of agricultural improvement and efficiency and in raising the profitability of an estate.” Hey (1996)*

The land steward would serve the landowner, but he would most definitely not be classed as a servant. Indeed, he may have one or two servants of his own. He would not live within the estate mansion, but could expect to have the use of an estate property for himself and his family.

In some cases, he would be an educated, professional individual, perhaps a lawyer. However, Edward Laurence (1743), whose thoughts are echoed in 1801 by John Lawrence, advises against the employment of such men, preferring instead the sons of farmers who, having been brought up in the service of a particular landlord, would show greater loyalty and have a sound understanding of agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry.

The role of land steward would typically encompass:

- the collection of rents and management of the estate tenancies;
- accounting;
- the hiring and supervision of labourers and builders;
- regular surveys of estate property;
- acting as the landowners' representative when required;

- act as secretary to the landowner, including dealing with estate correspondence.

In such a position of responsibility the land steward would be expected to be of the utmost propriety and trustworthiness. Bear in mind also, the preponderance of the absentee landlord (while the cat is away &c) (I am looking at you, 1st Marquess Conyngham)

As G.A. Dean (1851) notes that personal integrity was essential:

*“I think that a steward should not only be a man of general intelligence (keeping pace by reading and observation with the daily advancing state of agriculture), but should likewise possess great firmness of purpose, and strength of moral character.”*

Our anonymous extract begs the question: How much is loyalty worth?

Lawrence (1801) is more forthright in expressing the problem:

*“The allowance of a liberal salary, fairly adequate to the labour of the steward has often been insisted upon, and with the utmost reason, as highly conducive to the interest of the employer; for the agent [steward] being unsatisfied in this essential point will be necessitated, either to bestow too little attention on his trust, or driven, as it were, to indemnify himself by accepting perquisites, which it is plain, must ultimately come out of the pocket of his lord, and which in fact are an inlet to the grossest frauds.”*

Lawrence goes on to present the case originally recorded in 1740 (Laurence) of a “godly steward” who, whilst worth no more than £10 a year, had amassed a sum of over £600 over 15 years. This through bribery of his master’s tenants for the maintenance of low rents.

Thompson (1963) notes the difficulty in generalisations regarding the remuneration of land stewards. However the increasing professionalisation of the role is reflected in the change in terminology from ‘steward’ to ‘agent’ after 1850.

For the purposes of my research – I have waffled enough already, and must find out more regarding the wages of land stewards (agents) employed at Bifrons, and how this sits within a national framework.

## References

Anon (1822) *Hints on the duties and qualifications of land stewards & agents : comprising directions for conducting repairs, alterations, buildings, and other improvements : with a plan for the management of neglected estates, beneficial to landlord & tenant / By a steward.* Faversham. *The Making Of The Modern World* [online] Accessed: 8 Sept 2016.

Dean, G.A. (1851) *The land steward.* (<https://play.google.com/books/reader?printsec=frontcover&output=reader&id=iAYzAQAAMAAJ&pg=GBS.PR4-IA3>) London:Atchley & Co.

Hey, D. (1996) *The Oxford companion to local and family history.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Laurence, Edward. (1743) The duty and office of a land steward: represented under several plain and distinct articles ; ... To which is added, an appendix, ... The third edition, with alterations and additions. By Edward Laurence, ... London, 1743. Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale. University of Oxford.

Lawrence, John. The modern land steward; (<http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2119>)



[/mome/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=MOME&userGroupName=oxford&tabID=T001&docId=U102793003&type=multipage&contentSet=MOMEArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE>\)](#) in which the duties and functions of stewardship are considered and explained. With their several relations to the interests of the landlord, tenant, and the public. Including various ... information on rural and economic affairs. London, 1801. *The Making Of The Modern World*. Web. 8 Sept. 2016.

Thompson, F.M.L (1963) *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century* ([https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=nOtkAgAAQBAJ&pg=PT147&lpg=PT147&dq=salary+land+steward+ninwteenth+century&source=bl&ots=uSvwDZc3PH&sig=\\_8SXP0uLXnqHmT6tAx9UYIecA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjugIv6z4LPAhUpIsAKHWE4CMkQ6AEIHjAA#v=onepage&q=salary%20land%20steward%20ninwteenth%20century&f=false](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=nOtkAgAAQBAJ&pg=PT147&lpg=PT147&dq=salary+land+steward+ninwteenth+century&source=bl&ots=uSvwDZc3PH&sig=_8SXP0uLXnqHmT6tAx9UYIecA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjugIv6z4LPAhUpIsAKHWE4CMkQ6AEIHjAA#v=onepage&q=salary%20land%20steward%20ninwteenth%20century&f=false)). (Chapter 6)

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## The Foundation of Bridge & Patricbourne School



The Conyngham family displayed considerable interest in the welfare of their villagers and tenants.

One such example being that they were instrumental in the foundation of Bridge and Patricbourne School (formerly the National School) in 1849.

The Cathedral archives hold the deed for a grant of land called Soot House meadow by Francis Conyngham, 2nd Marquess Conyngham to the vicar and churchwardens for the erection of the school:

*“... a well-adapted spot of ground on the banks of the Lower Stour, and behind the main street of Bridge, on the road to Patricbourne.”*

On the 1 May 1849, the Kentish Gazette was beside itself with joyous sycophancy as it reported the ceremony of the laying of the foundation stone:

*“The stone was laid by the Dowager Marchioness of Conyngham to whose munificence the promoters of the laudable undertaking are indebted for the site, as well as pecuniary assistance... On alighting from her carriage, her ladyship received the hearty and sincere congratulations of the large company... A bower of laurels was formed for the reception of the Marchioness... three times three hearty cheers were given, and a profusion of plum buns distributed amongst the school and other children by Miss Augusta Conyngham, the lovely and interesting daughter of Lord Albert.”*

### Sources

*Kentish Gazette*, Tuesday 1 May 1849.

Canterbury Cathedral Archives: CCA-U3- 167/25/B/1/6

### Further Reading

Here's History: Kent [website] Education 1700-1851 (<http://www.hereshistorykent.org.uk/displaytheme.cfm?pagetype=Themes&themeID=112&category=Education>)

Hume.R. (199) Education in Kent 1640-1914 in *Religion and Society in Kent*.

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## Taylor's Theorem







Probably by Louis Goupy, watercolour and body colour on vellum laid down on card, 1720

The more I look, the greater the Bifron's luminaries ...I give you Brook Taylor.

Brook Taylor (18 August 1685 – 29 December 1731) inherited Bifrons in 1729, and died without male issue in 1731. The estate then passed to his brother Herbert (1698- 1763).

A distinguished Cambridge scholar and mathematician, and the author of a learned treatise on Linear Perspective (1715), Taylor was chosen fellow of the Royal Society in 1712, and elected secretary in 1714.

Taylor is best known for the theorem or process for expanding functions into infinite series that commonly bears his name.

As I prefer words to numbers, I shall just leave this [here](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taylor%27s_theorem). ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taylor%27s\\_theorem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taylor%27s_theorem))

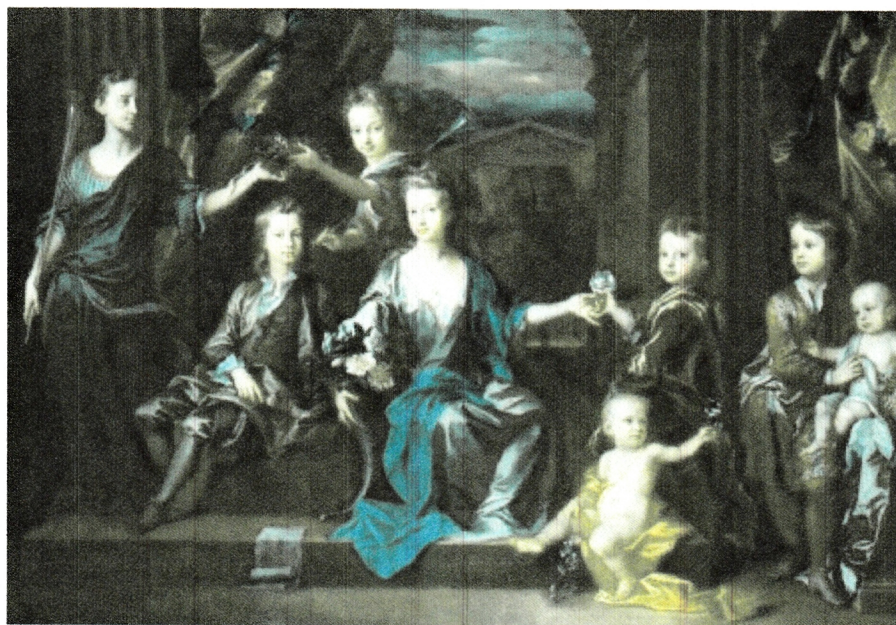


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# Fame is sweeter than the white rose

*Taylor family motto*



[The Children of John Taylor of Bifrons Park \(http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw08092/The-Children-of-John-Taylor-of-Bifrons-Park\)](http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw08092/The-Children-of-John-Taylor-of-Bifrons-Park)

by John Closterman  
oil on canvas, 1696?  
74 3/4 in. x 107 in. (1898 mm x 2718 mm)  
Purchased, 1980  
Primary Collection  
NPG 5320

Bridges Taylor (1695-1727)

[Brook Taylor \(1685-1731\) \(https://bifronsandbeyond.wordpress.com/2016/08/30/taylors-theorem/\)](https://bifronsandbeyond.wordpress.com/2016/08/30/taylors-theorem/)

John Taylor (1687-1703)

Margaret Taylor (1683-1738)

Mary Taylor (1680-1770)

Nathaniel Taylor (1687-1700)

Olive Taylor (1681-1757)

Upton Taylor (1696-1727)

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# Bifrons: owners and tenants

## In brief:

**1607 -1611:** Construction of original house by John Bargrave (or Bargar).

**1662:** Sale of Bifrons to Sir Arthur Slingsby. (Followed by 4 further owners)

**1694:** John Taylor purchases Bifrons Park

**1729:** Brook Taylor inherits Bifrons Park

**1731:** Herbert Taylor inherits Bifrons Park

**1767:** Edward Taylor inherits Bifrons Park

**1770:** Demolition and rebuilding.

**1825-1827:** John Loftus, 2nd Marquess of Ely KP (15 February 1770 – 26 September 1845), is the first tenant of Bifrons.

**1828:** Anne Isabella Byron, Baroness Byron, is the tenant at Bifrons with her daughter Augusta 'Ada' (later Lady Lovelace).

**1830:** House is purchased by Henry Burton Conyngham, 1st Marquess Conyngham ((1766–1832).

**1882 – 1939:** House is let to various tenants –

- Edward Weinholt
- J.A. Miller
- Frank Penn (1851-1916) Kent and England cricketer.
- Col. Milo Talbot and Mrs Talbot

**1939-1945:** House is taken over for military purposes.

**1945:** Demolition of Bifrons.

## Bibliography

Blake, P.H. (1990) *The Builder of Bifrons* (<http://www.kentarchaeology.org.uk/Research/Pub/ArchCant/Vol.108%20-%201990/108-11.pdf>). *Archaeologia Cantiana*, **270**, p.270.

Dover Express – Friday 10 January 1902. *Our Villages:* (<http://dover%20express%20-%20friday%2010%20january%201902/>) *History of Patixbourne* (<http://dover%20express%20-%20friday%2010%20january%201902/>).

Thomas, B.M. (1992) A history of Bifrons mansion house. (<http://www.kentarchaeology.org.uk/Research/Pub/ArchCant/Vol.110%20-%201992/110-13.pdf>) *Archaeologia Cantiana*, **110**, p. 313-329.

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