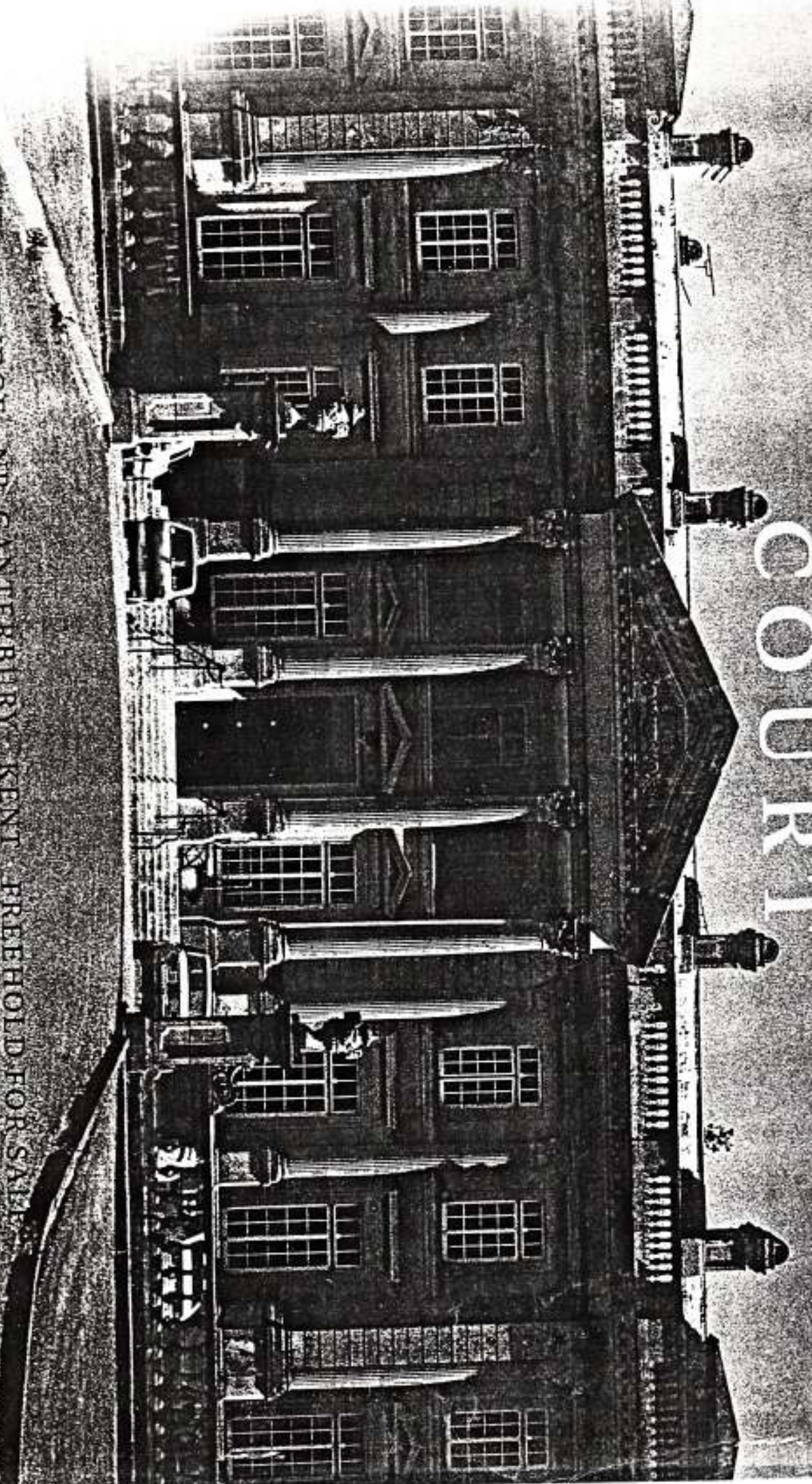




By Order of the South East Thames Regional Health Authority  
on behalf of the Secretary of State for Social Services

# HIGHLAND HIGGOURT



BRIDGE NR GANTHERBURY KENT FREEHOLD FOR SALE



Highland Court is situated to the south-east of Canterbury on an elevated site overlooking open downland. The Bridge intersection of the A2 is only a quarter of a mile distant and accordingly Highland Court enjoys excellent road communications to both London and the Continent via the A2/M2 and National Motorway system. London - 1 hour and 20 minutes. Continent - 1 hour. Manston International Airport - 12 miles.

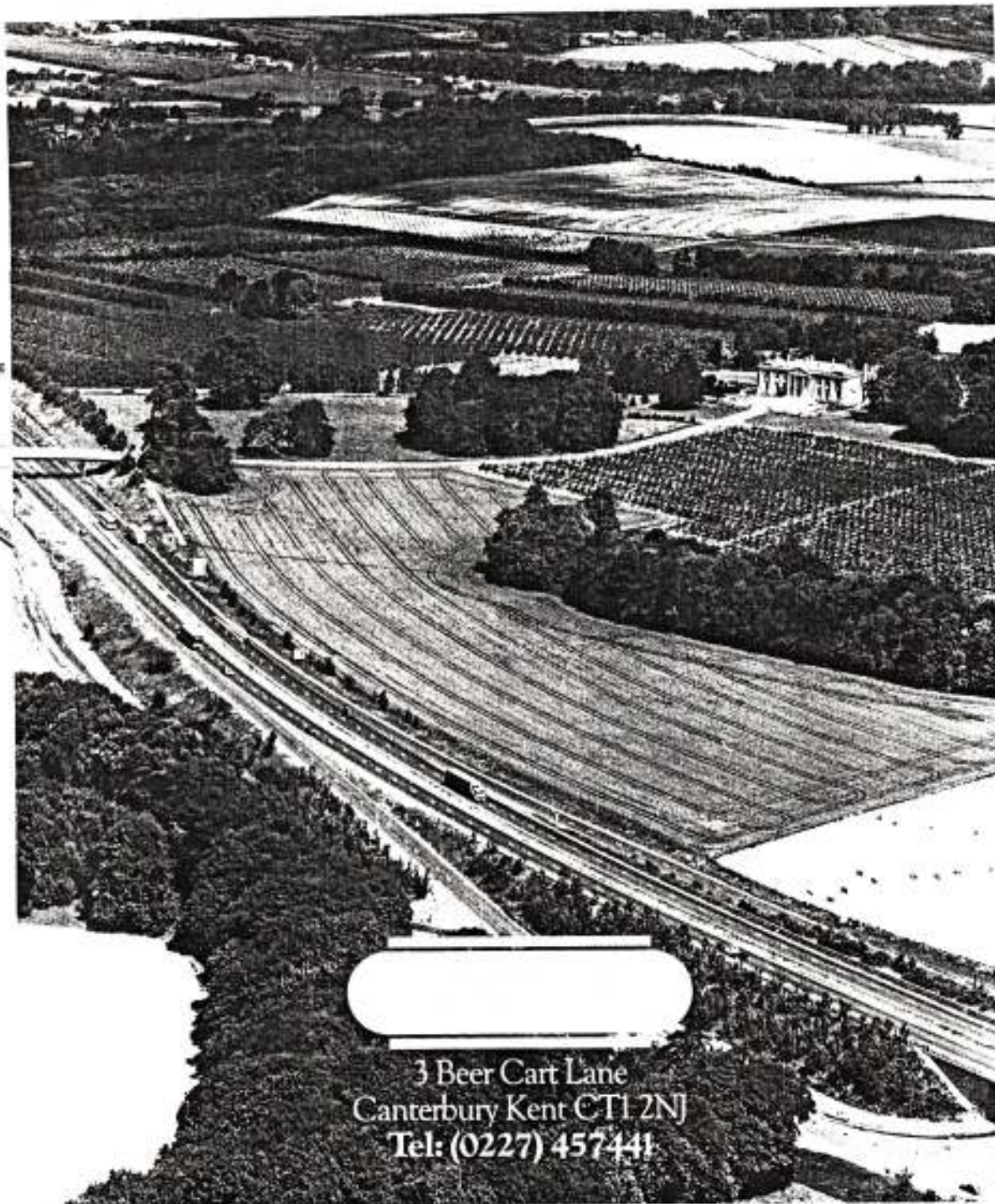


Canterbury, with its Cathedral, two main line railway stations and excellent shopping centre, is approximately 4 miles distant.

Highland Court is a Grade II\* Listed building of outstanding architectural interest. The original house was constructed in the reign of Edward II (1320) and subsequently extensively remodelled in 1768 by Ignatious Popham and again by Countess Margaret Zborowski in 1904, when the property gained its current Palladian heritage.

It was during the 1920s that the property achieved renown as the birthplace of "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang" when under Count Zborowski's influence the house possessed one of the finest motor workshops in the country.

The building affords some 12,500 sq. ft. gross of accommodation on lower ground, ground and two upper floors and occupies a site of approximately 22 acres land to garden, park and woodland.



3 Beer Cart Lane  
Canterbury Kent CT1 2NJ  
Tel: (0227) 457441

There are two walled gardens, two lily ponds, a tennis court and numerous out-buildings within the curtilage of the site, comprising the former carriage house and stable blocks. There is also a Blue Peter bungalow contained within the gardens.

All mains services are connected, electricity being supplied via a dedicated sub-station and back up generator.



The building is currently being used as an annexe to the Kent and Canterbury Hospital. Before then it was used as a private residence. Alternative uses identified for the site include office, hotel, residential, nursing home or private medical establishment. However, specific planning enquiries should be directed to the appropriate authorities including Canterbury City Council as the planning authority.

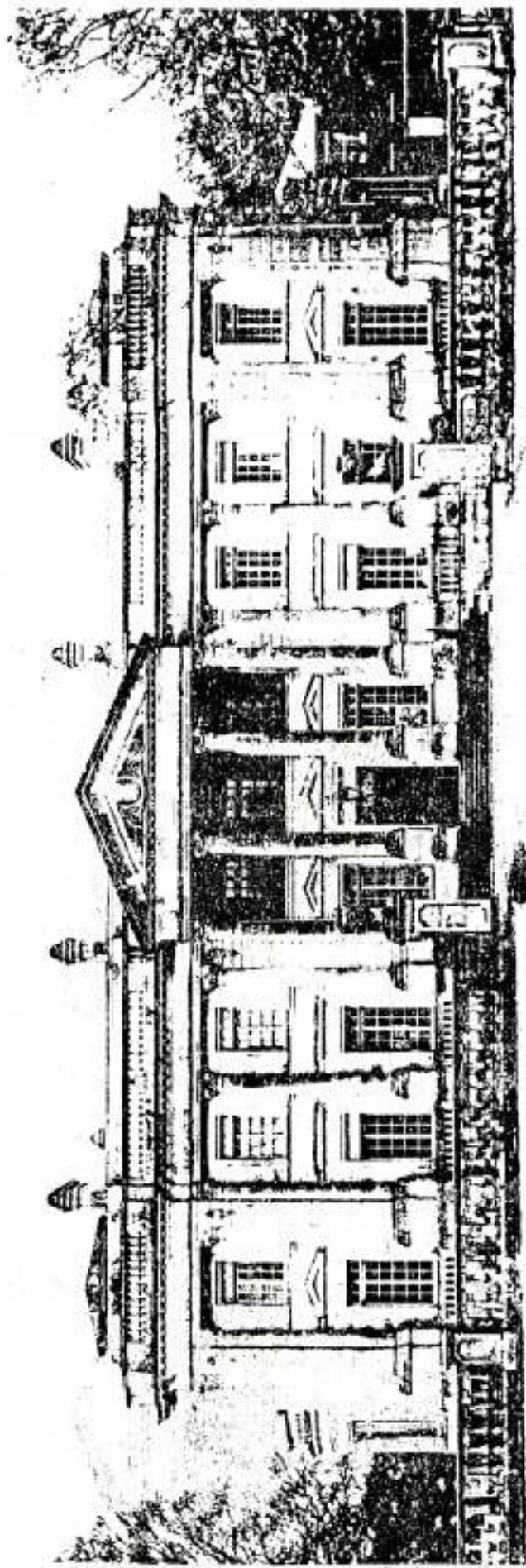
Vacant possession will be given upon completion of all legal formalities.

The property and grounds are offered for sale freehold by private treaty for which offers in excess of £1 million are invited subject to contract.

Viewing is strictly by appointment only through the sole agents - Cluttons. No casual visitors will be permitted to view.

Misrepresentation Act 1967 The particulars contained in this brochure are believed to be correct, but accuracy cannot be guaranteed and they are expressly excluded from any contract.





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## Higham. (Bridge)

### 1. Introduction

Highland Court Hospital, (formerly named Higham house) is now a residential home for the mentally handicapped, which has a long and varied history. There has been a house on this site for more than five hundred years, but the oldest part of the house now standing in this position was built by Ignatius Geophogan in 1768.

The Rev. Charles Hughes - Hallett lived in the house for a considerable period and it served as a vicarage to Patrixbourne Church. His son and heir, Rev. James Hughes - Hallett continued to live in the house after his father's death even though his parish was petham with Waltham. After the death of Rev. James Hughes - Hallett at the age of 84 a London banker with a passion for growing orchids bought the house, but was regrettably persuaded to sell to the charming Countess Zborowski. The unfortunate Countess, after spending a great deal of money converting the house to her own particular tastes, died shortly before the work was completed. Her sixteen year old son, Count Lois Vorow Zborowski



became the most colourful character of all the owners of Higham. It was during this time that the famous 'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang' car emerged from the garages at Higham.

It took four years to settle the estate after the tragic death of the Count in 1924 and it was not until 1928 that the house was bought by Mr. Walter Kennedy Whigham, who after changing the name to 'Highland Court', lived there (except during the years of the Second world war) until 1948. It was offered to the Regional Hospital Board who in 1951 opened the house as an annexe to Kent and Canterbury Hospital dealing with gynaecological and ophthalmic patients. It was closed, due to financial circumstances and centralisation of all units in 1968, and stood empty until 1972.

In November 1972 it opened its doors once again as a hospital, but this time as a residential home for the mentally handicapped. Patients live to their full potential in a happy and friendly atmosphere and it is hoped will continue to do so for many years.



## Higham

### 2. The Early Days.

Research work carried out at County Hall, Maidstone and at the Beany Institute in Canterbury showed that the mansion house called Higham existed in the North-East corner of the parish of Patrichtowne during the reign of Edward II (1320) and was owned by a family by the name of De Hegham.

The property changed hands many times during the reign of Henry VIII (1543) Higham was added to the already vast estates of Thomas Culpepper. It then passed to Anthony Aucher, whose descendent, Sir William Aucher died without issue in 1726. He bequeathed it to his sister Elizabeth who on her marriage entitled her husband Thomas Corbett LL.D. possession of the property. Their fourth daughter Antonio married Ignatious Geoghegan who in 1768 built the house which stands today. They lived in the house until 1781 when James Hallett Esq. became the new owner.



## Higham

### 3. James Hallett E.S.Q.

At the time of the purchase of Higham, James Hallett owned the manor of 'Little Dunmow', Essex which carried with it the right to present the traditional 'fitch of Bacon'. This was a slice of bacon awarded each year to the happiest married couple residing within the parish of Dunmow.

A portrait of James Hallett depicts him as a well-fed, well dressed wealthy Georgian. Portraits of other members of the Hallett Family were painted by Gainsborough; "The Morning Walk" which hangs in the National Gallery, and the "Hallett Family" painted by the Frenchman Francis Hayman, who was Gainsborough's teacher, is part of a private collection. According to the Diary written by one of James Hallett's nieces who lived with him, they all lived very graciously in a house filled with the finest china, silver and furniture.

James Hallett's father had been the Captain of a ship belonging to the Hon. East India Dock Co. In those days if one survived and was not 'lost at sea' it was

a very lucrative job as one of the Captain's perks was to be able to trade in India to one's own accord. To this already very lucrative position he increased his wealth by marrying another ship's Captain's daughter. He also inherited property in Essex and a considerable amount of money.

when James Hallett died in 1823 at the age of 84 he bequeathed Higham to his nephew; his sister having married an Oxfordshire man by the name of Hughes. The property of Higham was left to Charles Hughes on the condition that he added the name of Hallett to his own name by Deed Poll, within a year and a day.

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## Higham

### The Rev'd Charles Hughes-Hallett

Charles Hughes wasted no time in adding the name Hallett to his own. He had previously been presented with the perpetual curacy of Little Dunmow by his Uncle and in 1813 was presented with the Chapel-ency of Bridge and vicarage of Patricbourne by Edward Taylor of Bifrons. At that time Charles Hughes-Hallett lived at Bridge Place, Bourne Park.

The Archdeanery Court Mandate of Inductions Sequestrations and relaxations of 1729-1869, in Canterbury Cathedral Library show the following entry:

"on Receiving a Mandate from his Grace the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury bearing the date twenty-fourth day of February 1813, a Mandate issued forth from the official General of the Archdeacon Court of Canterbury to all and Singular clerks, to instruct the Rev'd. Charles Hughes-Hallett, clerk, Master of arts to the Vicarage of Patricbourne with the Chapel of Bridge, annexed in the Archdeanery of Canterbury late void by the Sequestration of William Taylor, the last incumbent there.

To which he was presented by Edward Taylor Esq., of Bifrons in the County of Kent, the true and undoubted patron thereof."

Charles Hughes - Hallett married Frances Anne, the daughter of Sir Edward Knatchbull 8th bart of Mersham Hatch. Lady Knatchbull was the daughter of John Graham, Lt-Governor of Georgia at the time of the American war of Independence. During the uprising they lost all their plantations and 227 slaves!

Before being involved in a carriage accident which crippled her for the rest of her life, Frances Anne presented her husband with nine children, the eldest of whom followed his father's profession into the church.

The Rev'd. Charles Hughes - Hallett died at the age of 68, on the 10th of May 1846, and was buried beside his wife who had died the previous year on the 14th March at the age of 54. He had held the Vicarage of Patixbourne for 33 years.

Higham then passed to the eldest son, Rev'd. James Hughes - Hallett.



## Higham.

### 5. The Rev'd. James Hughes-Hallett.

James had been born in 1807 and was the eldest of nine children, several of whom died in their early twenties in various parts of the world. He married the daughter of Gen. Sir Thomas Cope Montresor of Ospruge; she had been born 'on the march' in India during the war with the Marhattas.

On the death of his Uncle, Graham Hughes-Hallett, the Rev'd. James was inducted as vicar of petham with waltham on November 13th. 1837, by his brother-in-law, Sir John Honeywood. The Archbishop made him live at petham for half the year, where he built a house to act as a vicarage. Portraits of Rev'd. James Hughes-Hallett and his wife were painted by the French artist Sanges and were exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1854.

At that time the Higham Estate was very prosperous, in particular the breeding of highland cattle and pigs. All the water required for the house was drawn from a well, by donkey wheel and a special herd was kept at the farm for this purpose.

The Rosegarden at Higham  
designed by Rev. Thomas Halliwell (1768)



Higham The Manor viewed from the  
main driveway





During the periods when James was resident at Higham he would ride, or drive his trap to Pertham for the Sunday Services, stopping over for lunch with friends so that he could take the evening prayers.

The Hughes - Halletts of Higham seemed to be of very strong stock. James remained Master of the hunt until at the age of 84 a sudden riding accident while hacking home at dusk, called a halt to his equestrian activities. His sister sold his horses whilst he was recovering from the fall. The family strength and will-power is further illustrated by an account from Lt. - Col. N.V. Hughes-Hallett, of Cheltenham, and grandson of James Hughes-Hallett, that one of James' sisters emigrated from Higham to Australia at the age of 93 to go and live with an elder sister.

The Rev'd. James Hughes-Hallett died 3rd Nov. 1901 at the age of 96. Higham was bequeathed to Col. J.W. Hughes-Hallett C.B., C.V.O., D.S.O., of the Seaforth Highlanders. He had no son and was domiciled in Scotland so Higham was put up for 'SALE'

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## Higham

### 6. The Days of William Gay.

Higham was bought by William Gay, a retired London banker with a wife who was married with two sons and two daughters. Apart from farming the estate he took a very keen interest in the adjacent grounds to Higham and indulged in his favourite pastime of growing orchids.

During this period the walled garden was constructed and many types of fruit were grown, including grapes and figs. A qualified team of gardeners were employed and no expense spared.

Mrs. L.M. Crookenden, widow of the late Col. Crookenden of Barham, and only surviving child of William Gay, recalls her childhood at Higham as being happy but very much according to Victorian etiquette which still lingered on.

Her father owned a much prized herd of pedigree Highland cattle which roamed the estate, and she recalls one occasion when 'Hopkins' the Bailiff was taking a white bull to be slaughtered, at the local butchers; the bull had other ideas and tossed the Bailiff over the church

would before making off down the village high street, causing great fluster amongst the villagers.

Mrs. Crookenden's mother was of French ancestry and this had some influence on the decor and furnishings of the house. She enjoyed entertaining and had a wide circle of influential friends; one of these being Countess Zborowski who lived opposite in Bridge Hill House. As a girl Mrs. Crookenden remembers being taken for tea with the charming countess and instantly disliking a young pale-looking boy called Louis. Also always in the background was the formidable figure of Miss. Hodges, the Countess' companion.

It was the friendship between the Countess and Mrs. Gay that was to lead to Higham being sold once again. The Countess had set her heart on buying the property from the Gay family and any objections raised were soon overcome by the Countess' charm.

Mrs. Crookenden still has in her possession a dolls house, originally made for the Hewlett family as an exact replica of Higham, which



must be over 150 years old.

## Higham.

### 7 Countess Zborowski and young Louis Voraw.

When Margaret Countess Zborowski first came to Bridge she set her heart on buying Higham and used all her charm to persuade the Gays family to sell the property. When the purchase was complete she set down plans for the whole house to be transformed. Unfortunately she never lived to see her dreams come true as she died of influenza just before the work on the house was completed.

Margaret was the wealthy granddaughter of William Astor and shortly after her marriage to Baron Alphonse de Sueres had ended in divorce she married Count Eliott Zborowski. He was of Polish/American ancestry and had inherited much capital from his father who had been one of the early settlers in the Eastern United States and had extensive property in New York and New Jersey.

To say that Count Eliott Zborowski was somewhat of a character would be an understatement. Tradition demanded that no

Self-respecting Zborowski never died with his bedsocks on. Elliott lived up to this tradition with full verve and vigour. His penchant for abandoned horseriding, polo playing and general zest for living gave credence to the tales that after an evening's drinking he rode his stallion up the main staircase at Coventry House, Melton Mowbray. Needless to say good manner and breeding prevented him taking the horse further than the bedroom door.

Into this warm, fun-loving high Society Louis Verow Zborowski was born on the 20<sup>th</sup> of February 1895. The boy grew up with many friends, two of whom were Lord Limerick's children, Viscount Glentworth and Lady Victoria. The children spending many happy holidays together at Dramore Castle in Ireland.

Louis listened with interest to his father's account of his apparent casual participation in the Great Paris to Vienna motor race in June 1902, and which he would have won but for a French adjudicator's decision against him. Cars now completely ruled the Count's life. The Stables at Melton Mowbray were closed and the horses sold. From now



on the Count's attention was completely captivated by the large noisy monsters which had been discribed by the Victorians as being an outrage to all decent living beings.

The Carefree world to which young Louis had become accustomed was shattered when he was eight years old when his mother returned from Nice with the news that his father had been killed in an automobile accident on the Grand Corniche Road. It was believed that his gold cuff-links had caught in the throttle lever on the steering column; throwing the Count into the roadside where he sustained a fractured skull. Louis felt very deeply the loss of his father and when he returned from the funeral at Burton Lazars the prospect of growing up under the care of two women - his mother and her companion, Miss Beatrix Hodges, did not bear thinking about.

After his father died, the house at Melton Mowbray was sold, the Countess, Louis and Miss Hodges moved to London. The Countess' health suffered with the London air and so they moved to Bridge Hill house, Bridge. The adjacent estate of Higham immediately

attracted the attention of Margaret Laura Zborowski and she was determined to persuade the Gay family to sell her the property. The Countess achieved her ambition in buying the house, but sadly just before the finishing touches to her 'dream House' were completed, she died of influenza.

Once again Louis made the journey to Burton Lazars cemetery where the countess was laid beside her husband. The young Count Louis was just sixteen when he moved to Higham with Miss Hodges and the rest of the household.

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## Higham

### 2 Count Louis von Zborowski

At the age of sixteen Count Louis Zborowski moved into the Higham estate. He was extremely wealthy, his father left him eight million pounds and his mother three million pounds.

He attended King's school, Canterbury where it is not actually recorded that he was expelled by all accounts though they were not sorry he left. Louis had a flair for languages, an inborn mechanical ability and an appreciable artistic talent, the latter being suppressed by his tutors as being considered effeminate. Tutors came and went. He spent a term at Eton and tried university life, but all failed. He was a natural intellect but his eccentric personality eventually became the downfall of all attempts of classical forms of education.

The young Count turned to cars for solace. The cars on the estate discouraged spirited driving due to the heavy body work so with the aid of some friends he transformed one of these by fitting a sporting light-weight coachwork. A local firm of Bligh



Bros. was co-opted into helping and also professional advice was sought at the Weighbridge Coachworks of Gordon Watney.

At this stage the Counts interest in machinery was not limited to cars alone. He developed a keen passion for aeroplanes as engines and had an aeroplane hangar at nearby Beeston aerodrome. Actual flying had little if any appeal. It is recorded that he remarked to his friends C.G. Le champion 'I find flying utterly boring', and so aeroplanes were left to be ragged and flown by his employees. Also moored at Faversham Creek was a boat fitted with a Mercedes engine, but again interest dwindled quickly. Motorcycles were purchased from local Canterbury shops and ridden with gay abandon through the estate and surrounding countryside, raising many a scornful eye from villagers.

One of his companions at this time was T. H. Lawrence, later Lawrence of Arabia. Another was his friend from King's school days, the ex. Sandhurst cadet, Clive Gallop who was to become a permanent part of the Higham scene for a number of years.

As his personality developed so did his love of practical jokes, and bizarre ideas. It was not unknown for him to booby-trap the rose garden with small explosive devices in order to catch unexpected visitors admiring the gardeners' handiwork. This was much to the horror of Ted Mansell the Head Gardener. It was also commonplace for him to use the Garden Statues for target practice or the front courtyard as a firing range.

The now famous Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Light Railway had its beginnings at Higham. The original narrow gauge track being salvaged from Jackson's scrapyard in Golden Square, Canterbury, and laid at Higham. A beautifully built locomotive designed by Sir Nigel Gresley and named 'The Green Goddess' hauled house guests and shooting parties around the estate. When the estate was sold after the Count's death the railway was bought by Capt. Howie and Lee Guinness and laid in its present position. The 'Green Goddess' is still a major item of the present day rolling stock.

Louis was also an early exponent of 'mad' movies. Trains featuring in many of them. He would be one of his main lady friends

to the Railway line and with the assistance of his friend the chief engineer, Len Martin would arrange a dramatic rescue in the gallant manner just as the train was approaching. The whole episode being captured on film to be shown later at one of the many parties. Len Martin recalls one incident when a specially constructed building was set on fire with the attention of Louis galloping through the inferno complete with en femme. On this occasion the stunt almost failed and they escaped with a very narrow margin of safety. Unfortunately all the films were destroyed after the Count's death in 1924, apparently his widow did not wish to be reminded of these escapades.

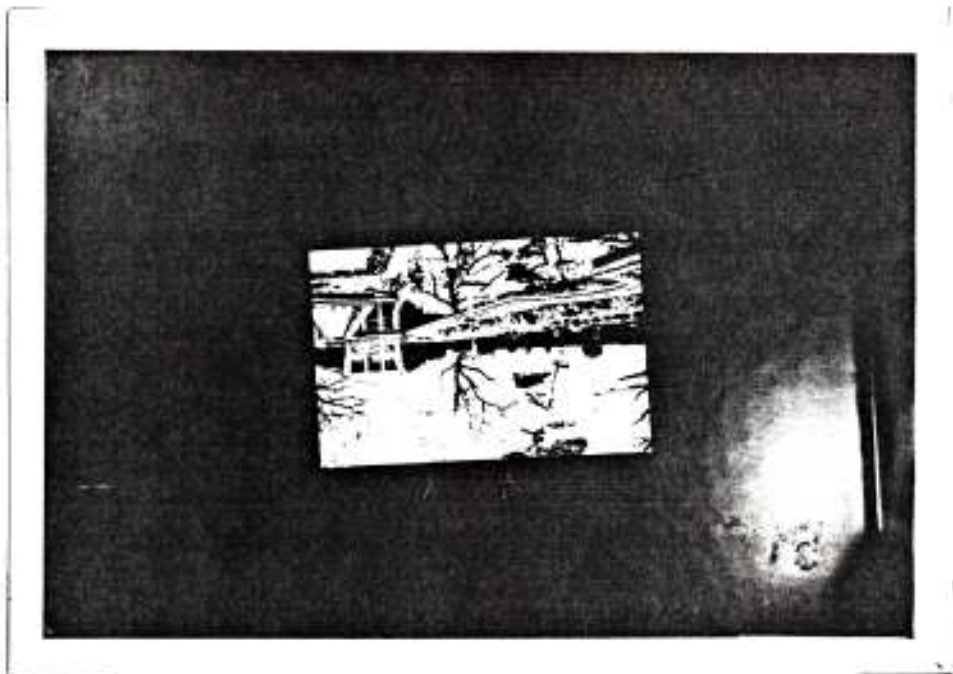
At the start of the 1914-18 war Louis volunteered his services, but much to his disappointment was refused admission to the armed forces. The direct reason was never revealed, but it may have been something to do with his Polish ancestry - Zborowski not sounding quite right for an Army officer. However not to be excluded completely, he worked on the 'home front' by turning over the coachworks, of which he was a director, to the manufacture of artillery wheels. Many



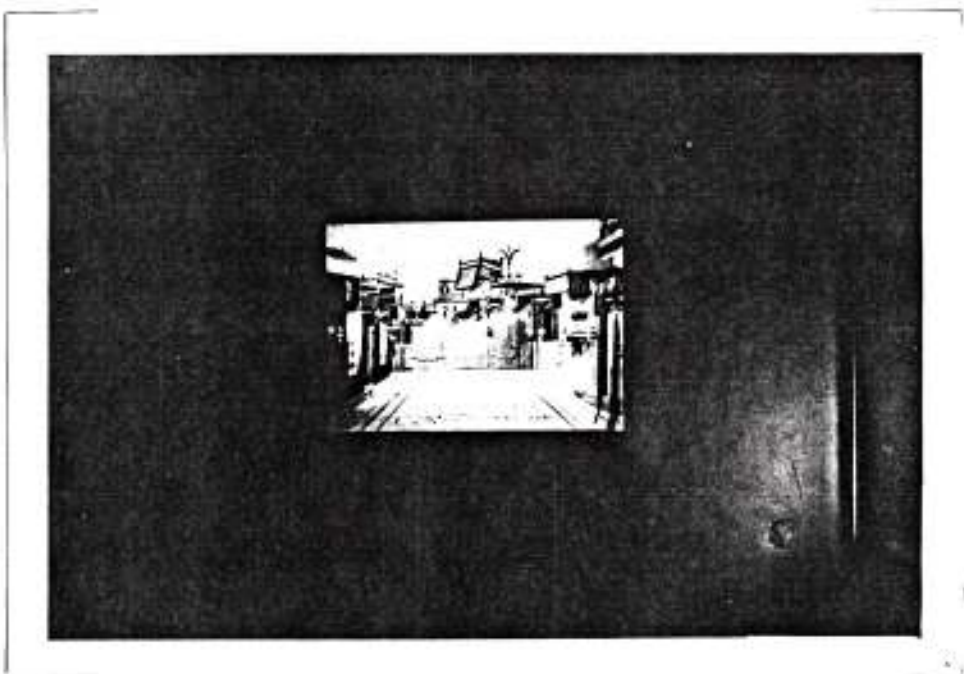
acres of pasture land also came under the plough in an effort to produce more food crops. Another of the Counts' war efforts was to put a search light to one of his high-powered cars, ostensibly to watch the Dover road for enemy infiltrators, but enjoying every minute of the feet night driving.

In keeping with his playboy image, and the family Tradition, a high-society social life developed at Higham. Many pretty girls from the theatre attended Higham Champagne parties; one of whom was Phyllis Merleman, the star of 'The Bing Boys'.

Louis eventually married an American show-girl, Violet Ethel Leicester and she became Countess Zborowski in 1919, honeymooning on the Thames at Wallingford. For the first Christmas at Higham as Count and Countess, the housekeeper, Mrs. Dixon was requested to draw up a list of all the 'servants' and estate workers' families. A grand Christmas Ball was arranged with bands coming down from London, and the very best food and wine. It was a great success and so became an annual event until 1923.



The house - covered in snow

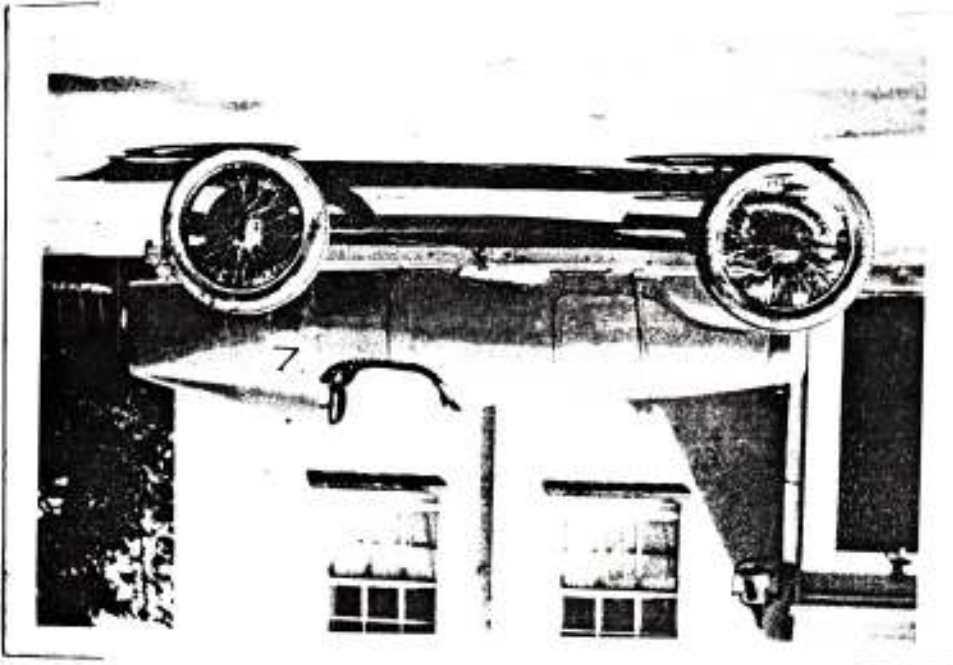


The main street in the village  
was in residence

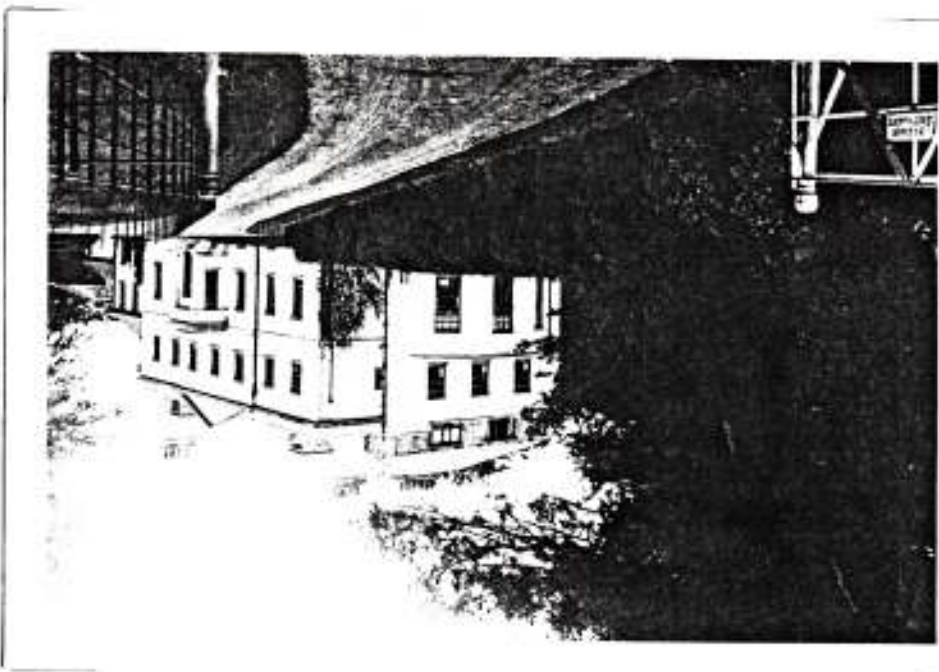
These events are still recalled by elderly local villagers and while talking to some of them another facet of the Count's character became apparent. Evidently at the last of these grand balls he raised his champagne glass to toast the estate workers; as his glass clinked it shattered which the Count took to be an ill omen. He immediately retreated to his bedroom and did not speak to anyone for a week. The following year he was tragically killed.

The Count's generosity is recalled in an article written by David A. Payne, which appeared in Veteran and Vintage Magazine in December 1969. In 1920 the Count, on hearing the laments of the local fire officer about his aged horse-drawn appliance being too slow to reach the outlying village fires in time to be of any use, offered the Brigade a Pilon racing chassis complete with engine and Dion rear suspension. His coachbuilders were commissioned to build a suitable body to comfortably accommodate ten men and a mile of hose. This superb 75hp. engine could develop speeds of 60 m.p.h. and could also haul a steam pump if necessary and was probably the fastest engine of its type in the country.





Courtesy Louis Zborowski's  
Bugatti at the rear of Highnam



Highnam House (left driveway)

What other village could boast such equipment? In recognition of his generosity the 1st Bn Brigade bestowed upon the Count the honorary title of Captain of the Brigade bestowed upon the Count the honorary title of Captain of the Brigade which he proudly retained until his death. His generosity was appreciated and known by all but at one time his debts had accumulated to such an extent that Higham was mortgaged for £10,000.

Although a millionaire, money could not always obtain what the Count wanted. William James Pierie who lived in London Road, Canterbury was Veterinary Surgeon to the Zborowski estate and had taught the Count to shoot as a young lad. After one particularly well retrieving for the Count, he asked him to name his price for the dog, but was told that it was for sale.

It was with shocked dismay that the estate workers heard of the death of the Count. He had died tragically from a fractured skull sustained while racing at Monza. His body was brought back to Dover, then to Higham and finally to its resting place with his parents at Burhen Lazars, to the tune of his favourite hymn (Lead kindly light). He died on October 19th, 1924 at the age of 29.

Prize my Grandfather  
Dog, even a millionaire  
couldn't buy him.



It was the end of our era the like of which  
Highnam was never to see again

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## 9. The Chitty Chitty Bang Bang

Probably the most famous car of all time was first envisaged and built at Hohenheim. Louis Zborowski's love of large, fast engines led him to design and build the now legendary Chitty Chitty Bang Bang. Immortalised by Ian Fleming in a book of the same name, but bearing little resemblance to the original car, written when living in the nearby village of Beckenbauer.

At the end of the first world war the Aircraft Disposal Co. advertised 30,000 surplus aero-engines for sale at Wadding Airport (later Croydon Airport). One of these was a six cylinder, 23,093 c.c. Maybach engine capable of developing just over 300 h.p.

This enormous engine was crammed into a specially lengthened Mercedes chassis. In order to retain all the Mercedes characteristics so loved by the Count the radiator and scroll clutch were retained. In fashion with the times the car was given a pointed prow for good air penetration, despite of the enormous drag of the big radiator and primitive bodywork. Chitty was the nature of an experiment and was first given a crude four seater body which

which was knocked up by Bligh Bros. of Canterbury, a firm with whom the Count had financial interests and under whose trade plates Chitty was first driven.

In 1921 Easter event at Brooklands race track saw Chitty make her debut, causing an immediate sensation. Zborowski and his renegade of engineering friends clad in loud checked palm Beach caps, started his monstrous car with the aid of half-axle from an aeroplane, compression twice and someone furiously winding the starting magnets was a slight no Brooklands habitué cared to miss.

Zborowski was cautious. He knew that much would be expected of his 23 like home-built car and that if it failed as a racing car he could become a laughing stock. He did not expect the handicaps to treat him lightly. As handling had previously proved difficult at Speed 7 car. of Sand was placed at the back of the body in order to keep the wheels in contact with the ground throughout the race.

Chitty was awarded 78 seconds from the nearest rival, a Frenchman, Andre Büllet in a

Sunbeam. On the second lap Chitty increased her lead, lapping at 108.15 m.p.h. This was Chitty's first victory. The bookies took 6 to 4 on Zbarawski, & 10 to 1 on the field. Chitty one two further events that day and came second behind the Count's 1/2 litre Mercedes driven by a friend. No Easter egg would have matched the Sweet Success their Monday.

Flushed with a feeling of success the Count returned to Higham. The car had behaved well and deserved further development and refinement. The Zenith Carburettors were replaced with three Claudel-Hobsons, each with its own two-branch manifold and outside pipe. Moreover the 'kumby' body was removed and guards were fitted above the exterior driving chains. All was completed for the Whitsun race meeting at Brooklands.

With a ten second start in the Lightning Short Handicap, Chitty won easily, lapping at 111.29 m.p.h. and averaging 102.6 m.p.h. A re-handicap for the next race proved too much for this magnificent machine, despite a lap speed of 113 m.p.h. and approaching 123 m.p.h. down the straight. A cow had been fitted over the radiator but this fell off; the petrol tank also

Split as the flexible chassis rode the Brooklands bumps, necessitating Chittys withdrawal from any further events that day.

The combination of Zborowski's temperament and Chittys construction was bound to lead to eventual success, but this was not to be in 1921 Brooklands Summer meetings. Harford Shock absorbers were fitted to Chittys to keep the back wheels down, but this only gave the car a curiously lolling appearance as she went round the track. In the Lightning Short Handicap Chittys achieved second place to Swain's G.P. Vauxhall, but was handicapped completely out of the Lightning Long Race. Although winning appeared to Zborowski's flamboyant nature he judged Chittys not so much by her track performance but by the fact that he greatly enjoyed driving this magnificent car on the near deserted roads of Kent.

By late Summer of 1921 an improved version known as Chittys II was nearing completion in the Hojham workshops. Chittys II followed the same general lines as Chittys I but with a stiffer wheel case. Using the same type of pre-war (probably 1907)



Mercedes chain driven chassis, an 18.882 c.c. Benz aeroplane was fitted. This car had been conceived rather as an exciting road car than for the track.

Having missed appearing at the August Brooklands meeting, although Chitty II had been included in the programme, Zborowski decided to enter both cars in the Autumn meeting. Unfortunately good fortune included them. The smaller car proved underpowered for the track and had to serve a handicap to overcome, having to give Major Seagraves' 3-litre Junbeam 8 seconds start in the 100 m.p.h. Short handicap and 12 seconds in the 8 1/2 mile version of the race. This was Chitty II's only appearance as a track car. It managed to lap at 108.27 m.p.h. but was never raced at Brooklands again. Nevertheless Zborowski had every reason to be pleased with his first excursion into the realm of fantastic motor cars. The Curants were here to stay.

During 1922 Zborowski drove Chitty II across France to Algeria followed by a white Mercedes to carry the luggage. Following a stay at Nergresco Hotel, Nice, Zborowski

# The legendary car that inspired a book and film

Chitty  
makes the  
head lines  
(1946)

ONE of the most famous racing cars of a near half century ago is to be found in Deal. It thrilled speed enthusiasts in the 1920s, and inspired the late Ian Fleming to break away from Bond and write a book for children. Now that book, titled "Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang," has become a musical film starring Sally Ann Howes and Dick van Dyke.

Chitty - Chitty - Bang-Bang is owned by Mr. Peter Harris-Mayes, a 39-year-old master butcher, who lives in London Road, Deal. The story of how Mr. Harris-Mayes found and restored the historic car is a romance in itself.

Mr. Harris-Mayes discovered the car, axle-deep in mud, on a farm at Sutton, near Dover. Grass was growing on her bonnet and chickens were roosting in her seats.

The owner, Dover garage proprietor Mr. William Hollis, gave him the car.

## Desert tour

Mr. Harris-Mayes spent the next 10 years restoring Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang to her original glory. Every available moment of his spare time went on the car — and plenty of cash too.

Since then, Mr. Harris-Mayes has travelled more than 1,000 miles in Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang, and has taken part in national speed

four valves per cylinder, operated by exposed push-rods and rocker gear.

Exhaust gases leave via a huge expansion chamber on the near-side of the bonnet, to which the large-bore exhaust pipe is attached, without any clamp ring; this pipe drooping, to disappear under the chassis.

The sump was scrapped by Count Zborowski when he made Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang to provide ground clearance. Lubricating oil is contained in a long, stream-linked tank beside the off-side chassis side member.

The crankcase has transverse cooling tunnels running through it, and to steady this great power unit as it rocks under idling torque, a metal strap passes under it from side members of the chassis.

A huge water pump is driven from the front of the crankshaft and mounted vertically. The drive goes through the Mercedes scroll clutch to the original Mercedes gearbox. Final drive is from a countershaft and

beginning of the century, did nothing to daunt him.

The Count inherited a fortune, and he spent most of it on racing cars which he designed, built and drove himself.

## Pranks

The Count was a typical product of the gay 20s, a man who could have walked from the pages of "Sapper" or Doenford Yates. He was very rich and very brave. And he was wild and full of schoolboy pranks.

Count Zborowski, who was of Polish origin, was well-known throughout East Kent in the early 20s. He went to Eton, and soon afterwards began building racing cars.

He transformed the sleepy countryside at Higham and around Canterbury. Villagers wondered what would happen next. For as well as being a car racing enthusiast, Count Zborowski had a passion for explosives.

Once a bathing party at Higham was abruptly ended



trials and safety rallies.

Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang was designed and made by the late Count Louis Zborowski who lived at Higham — now named Highland Court — near Canterbury.

The Count raced the giant car at Brooklands, where he lapped at 113 miles an hour, and also took it on a tour of the Sahara, venturing more than 150 miles into the heart of the desert.

## Scrapped

It is powered by a 230 h.p. Benz engine on a lengthened Mercedes chassis, and is chain driven. The Benz engine is the same as those used to power the giant German Gotha bombers of the First World War.

It has six cylinders and

exposed valve trains.

## Killed

The weight of the car is about 30 cwt., and it is 17ft. long. The engine develops 230 h.p. at around 1,400 r.p.m. to give it terrific acceleration, especially up hills.

This fine vehicle, which does only seven miles to the gallon, retains its original number plate, FN 5230.

Count Zborowski was killed at Monza while racing in the Italian Grand Prix of 1934, driving a Mercedes straight eight.

The Count was a speed enthusiast, and the fact that his father had been killed driving a 60 h.p. Mercedes in a hill climb at the

when an underwater explosion wrecked the pool and demolished most of the summerhouse!

One of the Count's favourite pastimes was to assemble members of his household in the garage and let them choose one of the fantastic cars!

## Restored

They could have had a Benz, a Mercedes, an Hispano-Suiza, a Ballot or Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang. Then they would take part in a thrilling road race to Dover and back.

Count Zborowski and his American-born wife used Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang extensively as a touring car. Their excursion deep into the Sahara ended only when all the cooling water boiled away!

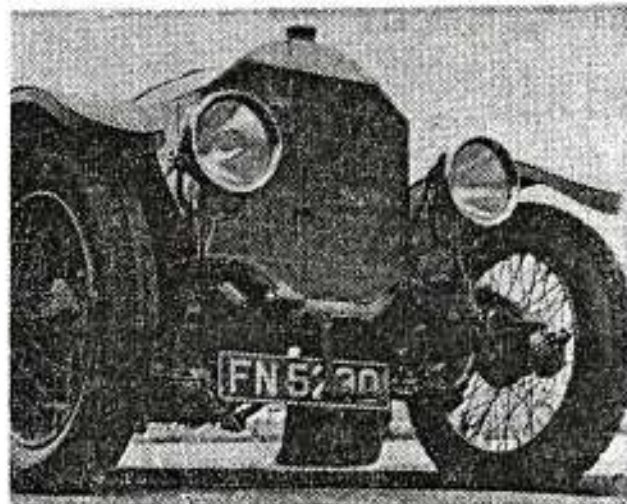
He took part in the great Indianapolis Race of 1923, and put much money into Aston-Martin, at that time in financial difficulties.

He died when his Mercedes straight eight went into a skid and crashed into a tree. Since then he has become a legend.

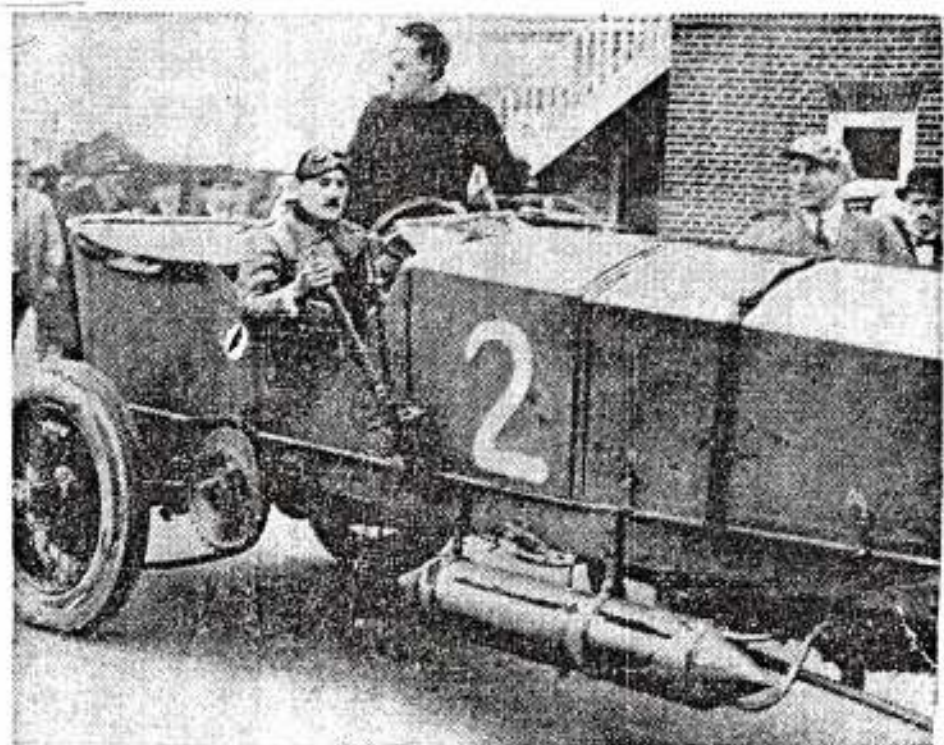
Mr. Harris-Mayes spent over £300 on the restoration of Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang and he says it's been worth every penny.

"Time and money spent on the restoration of this fine car is nothing. It has been a labour of love."

"Chitty - Chitty - Bang - Bang", which is set in East Kent, is published by Jonathan Cape.



IAYES at the wheel of Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang



COUNT LOUIS ZBOROWSKI at the wheel of Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang before the start of a Brooklands race.

Count Zborowski in  
his car 'Chitty' Chitty  
Bang Bang'



and his party drove some 250 miles south of Biskra on the fringe of the Sahara Desert where a close call to disaster was only just averted. Chittys radiator boiled dry just as the party's water supply was at its lowest level.

Before returning to England Zeranowski and his companion major Chie Callap drove up to Strasbourg in order to view the Grand Prix circuit where the French Grand Prix would be run later that year, both having entered cars for this event.

The Count had previously imported from Germany a 28/95 Mercedes chassis equipped with a sketchy test body, a six cylinder overhead camshaft engine, a direct third gear in its four gear box speed and a somewhat rudimentary four-wheeled braking system. This was to be the basis of Chittys III, but always known as the "white Mercedes". The original 7-litre engine removed (and eventually found its way into a boat). The chassis was lengthened and a six cylinder 16,778 c.c. Mercedes aeroengine fitted. At what time engines of this nature could be easily obtained for as little as \$30.

Washnighouse were approached for a new braking system, and with a complete new body, Chitty III became a comparatively modern shaft driven car, if still somewhat large for the year 1923.

Dunlop 1922 a scarcity of tyres made it essential to limit track events for Chitty type cars. However Chitty I entered and won the Southsea Speed Trials at an average speed of 73.10 m.p.h. In September 1922 Zbarowski had intended to resume racing at the Brooklands track. Unfortunately disaster struck during a fast practice lap when an offside front tyre burst, while climbing the members banking, turning round as she did so, went backwards through the wooden running hut at the beginning of the mile, tore off her front axle and came to rest upright a considerable distance away. The riding mechanic Ken Martin, was thrown out and badly shaken. Zbarowski stayed in his seat and escaped serious injury. One official, Chamberlain, had three fingers amputated as Chitty smashed through the running Box. (The poor unfortunate fellow was later killed in a similar accident but involving motorbikes.) Another official, Cann, saw the car go out of control and stopped

into a ditch, Chitty passing over his head without doing him any harm. That was Chitty I's last appearance Brooklands.

By 1924 Zborowski had become a team driver for Mercedes and all his visits to Unterhukheim were made in Chitty III. Chitty III was entered as a "Mercedes" in the Brooklands Winton meeting of 1924 in the private Competitors Handicap, indicative of the fact that Zborowski still remained. He lapped at 93.02 m.p.h. but was unplaced. However this proved to be merely a 'warm-up' for the short handicap 600 class event when Chitty lapped the track at 104.63 m.p.h. and won by a  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mile. At the Summer Brooklands meeting Chitty III was brought out again for the short handicap and lightning honey handicap, but he pipped to the post in events by Parny Thomas in a Leyland-Thomas Special, breaking all Brooklands' speed records. This surely was to be Zborowski's last appearance at Brooklands.

Back at Higham two other cars were under construction. One was never completed, but the other was notorious and known as the 'Higham Special'. A primitive chassis

frame carried a war-time Liberty V12 aeroengine and was the biggest power unit to ever race at Brooklands. The 27-litre engine was matched with a gearbox from 200.h.p. Benz with chain drive and stub axles of a 1908 Grande Prix Mercedes, finished with a two-seater body. It had a brief but sensational career. After the death of Curt Zborowski it was bought by Pamy Thomas for £125 who renamed it 'Babs'. In April 1926 he made a bid for the land speed record on the flats at Pendine, South Wales. All was going well and he had already beaten Seagrave's previous record by 20 m.p.h. by notching up 171.02 m.p.h. on the previous run, when on a last attempt to improve upon this speed the chain snapped, lashing up and killing the over restraint.

The car was entombed in the sand under the Golf course at Pendine, where it remained until 1969 when Professor O. Wyn Owen exhumed the car and completely restored it. In 1970 'Babs' was again driven over the flat sand at Pendine at a somewhat leisurely pace, to mark the fifteenth anniversary of Pamy Thomas' record attempt.



Only one Chubb's still remains in existence, this is Chubb II. After Zborowski's death it was thought to have been bought by a Mr. A. Fowler for £825, but later became part of the stock of David Scott - Moncrieff who had commenced selling horseless carriages to the nobility and gentry of the late twenties. Mr. William Earl Hollis of Dover bought Chubb hibernated in the corner of the farmyard for more than 20 yrs.

A young lad of 17, while collecting chickens from the farm for the family butchers shop in Deal, took an interest in the old wrecked car. Hollis told him that if he could clear the car away he could have it. Completely unaware of the car's historical past and her previous owner he began a task which was to take every spare moment of his life for the next ten years and cost him thousands of pounds. The meticulous restoration of Chubb's Chubb's Bang Bang II had begun. Peter Harris Mayers is a quiet, sensitive man with a unique devotion to the restoration of beautiful cars. Chubb II was in his possession for 25 years. During this time the car made various appearances in various showrooms as a centrepiece, appeared

on T.V. and helped to raise money for the children at Guy's hospital. It was only due to the financial burden of the two horn monster that forced Mr. Harris Mayers to decide to sell her in 1968. The road tax at this time, based on the cubic capacity of the engine, was £35. per quarter year, plus the fact that 11 m.p.g. was the best fuel consumption ever obtained.

She was put up for sale and bought for £16,500 by an American, Mr. M. Ruznick of Etendale, New York. Unfortunately when the sale was announced in the press a controversy arose over rightful ownership and Chitty spent the next year in a protracted case concerning shipment to the States.

Mr. Hollis (on whose farm Chitty had been allowed to rot) declared that he had never officially given the car to Peter Harris Mayers and that it should not have been sold without his permission. According to add to his collection at Beaumont and offered Mr. Hollis £4,000 for the car if he won legal ownership; he also made the plea that the car should not leave Britain. At the end of a three day hearing in a London High

Court, Peter Harris Mayers won the day and soon after Chittyp at last began her journey to the States. She has since changed ownership and is part of a private collection.

The name Chittyp Chittip Bang Bang still lives on, originally taken, not as we were led to believe in the film produced by Chubby Broccoli, and starring Dick Van Dyke, as the noise made by the exhaust, but from the somewhat lewd musical songs of the period, the word of which, like the singer, have long been forgotten. The legendary Chittip Chittip Bang Bang and her young millionaire creator belong to a distant age, the like of which we will never see again.

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10. From Higham to Highland  
Court.

After Court Zbrowski's death a sudden quiet fell over the estate and once more cattle grazed in the parkland undisturbed by the monstrous cars travelling at high speed up the driveway.

During the four years in which it took the Court's Estate Administrator, George Gosling, to finalise the sale of Higham, it was leased to a dairy farmer from Denham, Albert William Goldup, for £150 rent per annum.

Finally on Tuesday, 31st July 1928, Higham was put up for sale at the London Auction Mart, Victoria Street, London by John D. Wood & Co. It was described in the brochure as "The well-known and most attractive residential and sporting property of Higham; a fine classic mansion in a finely timbered park."

The house, parkland and home farmland were bought by Walter Kennedy Wigham of the Highland Investment Co. Ltd. of Crosby Square, London for the sum of £17,500 on the 31st July 1928.

After moving in with his new bride,



a French Countess from the Salignac Penlan family, he changed the name of the house to Highland Court. They did not wish to be dubbed the 'Whighams of Higham' and thought Highland Court more appropriate.

Walter Whigham and his wife had four sons, Walter Jr. Francis, Geoffrey (who died at the age of eight) and Bernard. Mr. Bernard Whigham recalls that the cellars were used as playrooms and a Hornby Railway Set laid out, so that the children could play without disturbing the rest of the household. Private tutors were employed for the children (the room that now serves as a dining room for the residents was the school room.) At Christmas horse parties were held and all the children from the village visited the house.

Highland Court mansion and its adjoining farm provided many jobs for the local villages. Many of the estate workers from Zborowski's time had remained, one in particular who returned to act as chauffeur to Walter Whigham was Ken Markin who had been Zborowski's riding mechanic. Many of the village girls started their working life as housemaids at the mansion house.

and married estate workers or Gardeners.

The Highland Court Investment Co. LTD expanded the farm and in 1930 new farm buildings and a new dairy were built. Also built about this time were new stable introduced adjacent to the house. Mr Bernard Whigham also said that grapes were grown on a fairly large scale for wine making, unfortunately all attempts at viticulture in latter years have always been failed by pheromons eating the fruit before maturation.

Mr Whigham became a well known and respected member of Cinch Society. He was twice Sheriff of Kent, but his main patronage was the Hospital Management Committee for 13 years and was host to princess Marnia when she visited Canterbury in 1935 to lay the foundation stone of the New Kent and Canterbury Hospital. In recognition of this work of his a ward in the new hospital was named after him, hence 'Whigham ward'.

In 1936 a Cricket ground was added adjacent to the grounds at the back of the house. (later in the mid-fifties a

pseudo-Tudor pavilion was added and Highland Court Cricket Club held many fixtures here during the season. Many ex-kent players number among the regular members of the team.)

Early in 1940 Mrs Whigham died, but the family had already moved to a smaller house in Beckenbourne where Mr. Whigham continued to live for the duration of the war.

During the war years Highland Court mansion was taken over by the war Department and was Brigade Headquarters for the London Scottish Regiment. It is believed that when Field Marshall Montgomery visited the troops shortly before D-Day he was recorded as having remarked on the luxurious quarters.

Mr Whigham remained in 1943, and a further son David and a daughter Cynthia were born. After the war ended they returned to Highnam for a short period until Mr Whigham's death in 1948 when the house was offered as and to the Regional Hospital Board as an annexe to Kent and Canterbury Hospital.

In the early Sixties when Highland Court Investment Co. LTD. were again expanding

the farm, it necessitated demolishing the old farmhouse estate. A large well was discovered and it is believed that this may have been the original well worked by Donkeys to provide water for the whole estate.

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## 11. From Private House to Hospital Annex

In 1968 when Mr. Walter Whigham, President of Kent and Canterbury Hospital Management Committee for 13 years, died, Highland Court was offered to the Regional Hospital Board as an addition to Kent and Canterbury Hospital. The project was then submitted to the Authorities and here followed protracted negotiations through the District Valuer, but the Hospital Management Committee were determined that as far as possible they would obtain Highland Court. They had the support of the Chairman of the Regional Board as a result, the building was finally acquired.

The plans for its adaptation to a hospital were drawn up by Mr. Cecil Burns and Mr. Bland who had been responsible for the plans of the main Hospital in Canterbury. The actual cost of acquisition and adaptation was estimated to be approximately £47,000 or £1,000 per bed, including all equipment. It was not possible to adapt the whole house at once and it was therefore planned to carry out the work in two stages. Each stage providing 20-25 beds for gynaecological and ophthalmic patients.

On Thursday, October 18th, 1951 Highland Court was formally opened by Mr. K. I. Julian C.B.E., chairman of the South Eastern Metropolitan Regional Board, Mr. E. J. Mount, chairman of the Hospital Management Committee presided at the ceremony which included a blessing and dedication to its new use, by the Hospital Management Committee's chairman now, Rev. R.A.F. Pratt. Hospital nurses formed a guard of honour to welcome the many guests including the mayor and mayress of Canterbury, Councillor and Mrs. S. H. Jennings, The Sheriff and Mrs. J. H. Barrett, and Mrs. Walter Whigham Jr., son of the late owner, together with many V.I.P.'s from the medical profession.

In his welcoming speech Mr Mount spoke of the late former owner of Highland Court and of his valuable service to the hospital. He said that there was probably no use to which Highland Court could have been put that would have pleased Mr. Whigham more than its becoming part of the Kent and Canterbury Hospital. The opening of this Annex, with its well equipped, up-to-date operating theatre would go far in helping to relieve the congestion at

## The Canterbury Hospital

After the opening ceremony bouquets were presented to the ladies, and all guests were taken on a tour of the Hospital where they admired the wards and spoke to the first four patients. All the visitors were very impressed with the oak ward which in previous years had been the ballroom and echoed the strains of waltzes and the clink of champagne glasses. From this room one appreciates the Sunken garden with its panoramic views of Canterbury beyond, framed by Lorraine Oaks and Beeches which make up the 30 acres of gardens surrounding the Hospital. To complete the afternoon's proceedings tea was served under the excellent supervision of Mr. Peter Moon of the Canterbury Hotel Catering Service Canterbury.

During the time that Highland Court served as an Annex to the main hospital at Canterbury it was under the control of the Matron Miss Sheehan, and staffed by Nurses and trainees. The General Nursing Council had given its approval for Student Nurses to attend training periods of three months at Highland Court as it was

considered to come under the same structure as Kent and Canterbury Hospital. Sister Souler was in charge of administration, sister Farmer was ward sister and Clarke was major Sister.

Many patients awakening from anaesthetic after operations opened their eyes to see beautiful stick-and-daub decorated ceilings, or to hear the birdsong drifting in through the open windows. Post operative recuperation must have been aided by strolls in the Sunshine or by sitting by the large enclosed lily pond. The warm friendly atmosphere is still fondly remembered by patients who spent their time in hospital at Highland Court.

The efficient and happy hospital continued its service until in 1968, due to financial costs and an attempt to centralize its units at the main hospital in Canterbury, it was decided to move the gynaecological unit back to Kent and Canterbury Hospital.

When the door closed after the last patient left, the hospital stood empty for four years until it was re-opened in November 1972.



## 12. A Home for the Mentally Handicapped.

In 1969 the parents of a 12 year old mentally handicapped Canterbury girl complained bitterly to the Kenton Gazette about the conditions at Leybourne Cottage Hospital, Maidstone. After the publicity given to the case by the newspaper the Hospital was visited by the then Minister of Health and Social Security, Baroness Concha. In time this was followed by a Government enquiry into Hospitals for the mentally handicapped.

The main objective from this enquiry was to reduce overcrowding and to open smaller 'family' units wherever possible. It was to this end that Highland Court was considered. Bridge Plain Rural District Council gave its informal approval to the Scheme providing the Hospital management committees, voluntary organisations and any other interested bodies.

It was planned to open Highland Court Hospital as a residence for approximately 50 moderately to light handicapped patients who would not have to rely too heavily on nursing care and would enjoy a fair degree of independence.

A little resentment from local villagers was experienced when the idea was first broached but after one reassurance the idea was accepted. Any worries the villagers might have had, have been proved completely unfounded as the patients from Highland Court are accepted as part of the village scene. They have taken part in Jubilee Celebrations, and won such events as Easter Bonnet Parades etc. The Village primary School issues invitations to the patients whenever they have concerts and are always greeting them with warm welcomes. The Hospital also depends on the help of voluntary workers from the village and also on the help and support of the local branch of the League of Friends.

After months of meetings and discussions, approval was given finally and the task of redecorating and refurnishing the hospital began. It was not until just before Christmas 1972 that Highland Court Hospital again opened its doors to yet another 'family'.

The first six patients, all boys, came during the week commencing 18th December 1972. All but one boy came from Keybourne Cottage Hospital, and he came from Princess Christian's Hospital, Tenbridge. The six original boys are

She is living happily at Highland Court today.

Since its opening many more patients have joined the first few; a further twenty came the following year and in 1974 a further five. Two more came in 1975 and an additional one each year since. A few have left the hospital to go on to hostel accommodation but any vacancies are quickly filled and there is always a waiting list of patients who need to be accommodated on a full-time basis.

Each month an average of five patients come to the hospital for short term care. These are patients who normally live at home but come into residential care for short periods while parents are on holiday or need a rest. Patients may always be accepted on this basis if an assessment is required by a consultant.

One day patient attends for two days a week so that she can be helped with her education and training, and also so that she can socialise with other residents.

At the hospital patients lead a wide and varied social life within the hospital and

outside. This includes discos, visits to the pub, social events with other hospitals and clubs, holidays in North Wales and trips to the Continent.

Some of the patients go to work in other hospitals, working in the greenhouse and carpentry workshops, while others attend the Adult Training Centre at Cow Lane, Canterbury. In the Occupational Therapy Department at the hospital patients are taught many arts and crafts and also learn cooking, housework and Gardening.

The mansion house may have seen more elegant and extravagant days but never has a family lived so happily at Highland Court. Pop records have taken the place of orchestras from London as in previous eras, but never has so much pleasure been derived as by the mentally handicapped residents living to their full potential.

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Information was obtained from  
the following sources.

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I would like to thank everyone who  
has helped me with my research and for  
the many letters, valuable information,  
loan of photographs etc. And for the many  
interviews. I very much appreciated the help.  
Thankyou!

# **SIGNS**

**Bill Dawson Sign Consultant**  
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Independent Sign Surveyor Planner  
& Designer Telephone 01-262 8387



Highland Court is situated to the south-east of Canterbury on an elevated site overlooking open downland. The Bridge intersection of the A2 is only a quarter of a mile distant and accordingly Highland Court enjoys excellent road communications to both London and the Continent via the A2/M2 and National Motorway system. London - 1 hour and 20 minutes. Continent - 1 hour. Manston International Airport - 12 miles.

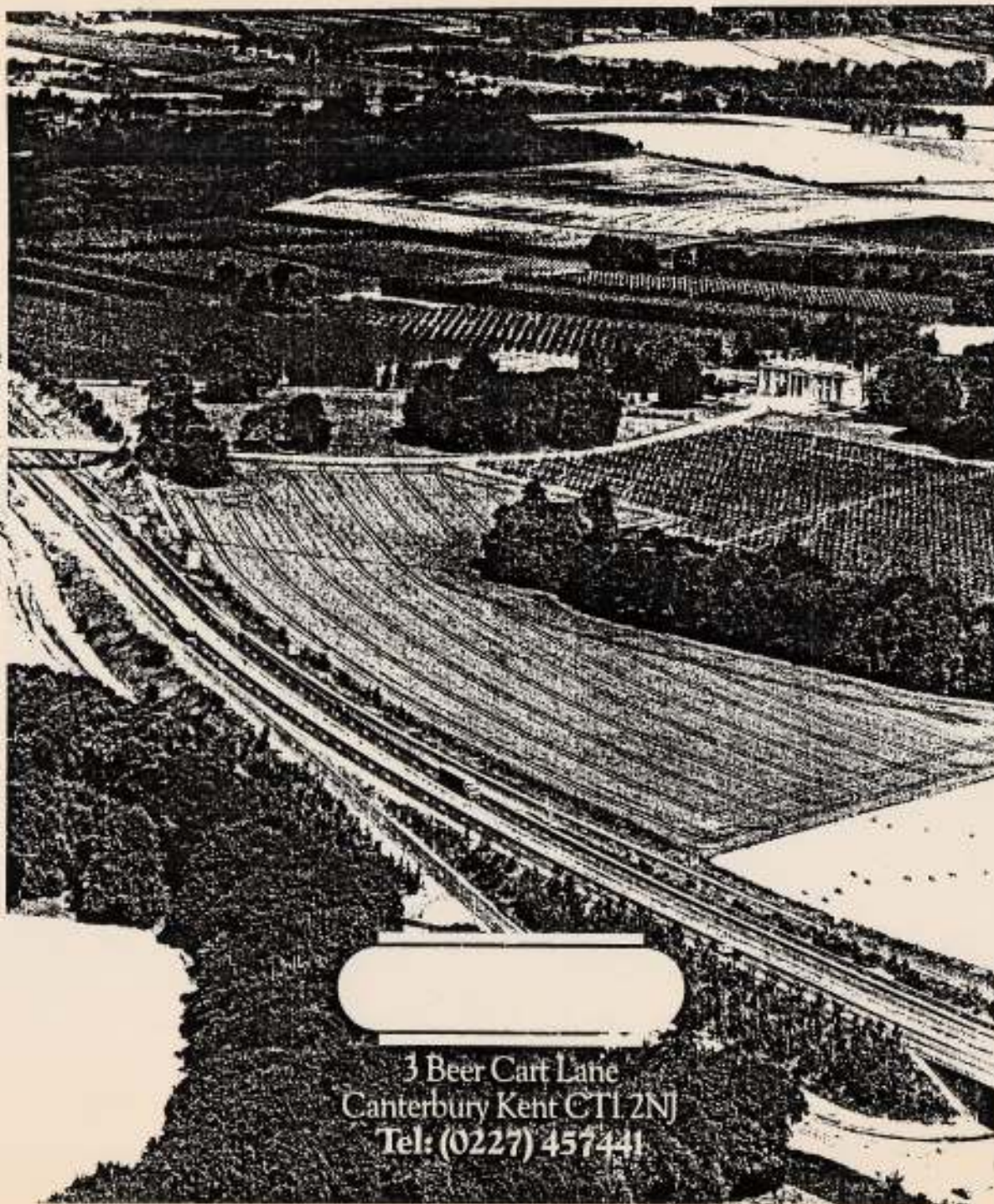


Canterbury, with its Cathedral, two main line railway stations and excellent shopping centre, is approximately 4 miles distant.

Highland Court is a Grade II\* Listed building of outstanding architectural interest. The original house was constructed in the reign of Edward II (1320) and subsequently extensively remodelled in 1768 by Ignatious Gough and again by Countess Margaret Zborowski in 1904, when the property gained its current Palladian portage.

It was during the 1920s that the property achieved renown as the birthplace of "Mitty Chitty Bang Bang" when under Countess Zborowski's influence the house possessed one of the finest motor workshops in the country.

The building affords some 12,500 sq. ft. gross of accommodation on lower ground, ground and two upper floors and occupies a site of approximately 22 acres laid to garden, park and woodland.



3 Beer Cart Lane  
Canterbury Kent CT1 2NJ  
Tel: (0227) 457441

There are two walled gardens, two fily ponds, a tennis court and numerous out-buildings within the curtilage of the site, comprising the former carriage house and stable blocks. There is also a Blue Peter bungalow contained within the gardens.

All mains services are connected, electricity being supplied via a dedicated sub-station and back up generator.



The building is currently being used as an annexe to the Kent and Canterbury Hospital. Before then it was used as a private residence. Alternative uses identified for the site include office, hotel, residential, nursing home or private medical establishment. However, specific planning enquiries should be directed to the appropriate authorities including Canterbury City Council as the planning authority.

Vacant possession will be given upon completion of all legal formalities.

The property and grounds are offered for sale freehold by private treaty for which offers in excess of £1 million are invited subject to contract.

Viewing is strictly by appointment only through the sole agents - Cluttons. No casual visitors will be permitted to view.



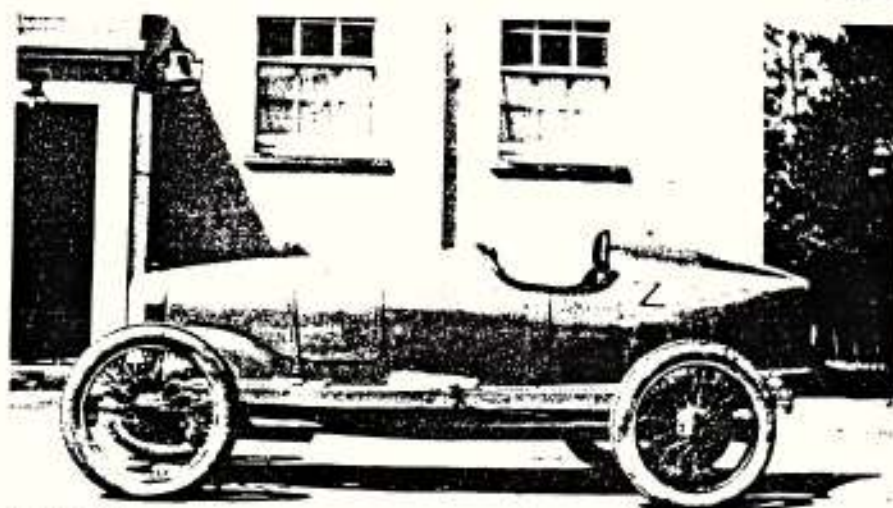




Higham House (left driveway)



Count Louis Zborowski's  
Bugatti at the rear of Higham



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  7. Countess Zborowski and Young Louis Vorow.
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## Higham (Bridge)

### 1. Introduction

Highland Court Hospital, (formerly named Higham house) is now a residential home for the mentally handicapped, which has a long and varied history. There has been a house on this site for more than five hundred years, but the oldest part of the house now standing in this position was built by Ignatius Geoghagan in 1768.

The Rev. Charles Hughes - Hallett lived in the house for a considerable period and it served as a vicarage to Patnixbourne Church. His son and heir, Rev. James Hughes - Hallett continued to live in the house after his father's death even though his parish was petham with Waltham. After the death of Rev. James Hughes - Hallett at the age of 84 a London banker with a passion for growing orchids bought the house, but was regretfully persuaded to sell to the charming Countess Zborowski. The unfortunate Countess, after spending a great deal of money converting the house to her own particular tastes, died shortly before the work was completed. Her sixteen year old son, Count Lois Vorow Zborowski



became the most colourful character of all the owners of Higham. It was during this time that the famous 'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang' car emerged from the garages at Higham.

It took four years to settle the estate after the tragic death of the Count in 1924 and it was not until 1928 that the house was bought by Mr. Walter Kennedy Whigham, who after changing the name to 'Highland Court', lived there (except during the years of the Second world war) until 1948. It was offered to the Regional Hospital Board who in 1951 opened the house as an annexe to Kent and Canterbury Hospital dealing with gynaecological and ophthalmic patients. It was closed, due to financial circumstances and centralisation of all units in 1968, and stood empty until 1972.

In November 1972 it opened its doors once again as a hospital, but this time as a residential home for the mentally handicapped patients live to their full potential in a happy and friendly atmosphere and it is hoped will continue to do so for many years.



## Higham

### 2. The Early Days

Research work carried out at County Hall, Maidstone and at the Beany Institute in Canterbury showed that the mansion house called Higham existed in the North-East corner of the parish of Patixbourne during the reign of Edward II (1320) and was owned by a family by the name of De Hegham.

The property changed hands many times during the reign of Henry VIII (1543) Higham was added to the already vast estates of Thomas Culpepper. It then passed to Anthony Aucher, whose descendent, Sir William Aucher died without issue in 1726. He bequeathed it to his sister Elizabeth who on her marriage entitled her husband Thomas Corbett LL.D. possession of the property. Their fourth daughter Antonio married Ignatious Geoghegan who in 1768 built the house which stands today. They lived in the house until 1781 when James Hallett Esq. became the new owner.

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## Higham

### 3. James Hallett E.S.Q.

At the time of the purchase of Higham, James Hallett owned the manor of 'Little Dunmow', Essex which carried with it the right to present the traditional 'Fitch of Bacon'. This was a slice of bacon awarded each year to the happiest married couple residing within the parish of Dunmow.

A portrait of James Hallett depicts him as a well-fed, well dressed wealthy Georgian. Portraits of other members of the Hallett family were painted by Gainsborough; "The Morning Walk" which hangs in the National Gallery, and the "Hallett Family" painted by the Frenchman Francis Hayman, who was Gainsborough's teacher, is part of a private collection. According to the Diary written by one of James Hallett's nieces who lived with him, they all lived very graciously in a house filled with the finest china, silver and furniture.

James Hallett's father had been the Captain of a ship belonging to the Hon. East India Dock Co. In those days if one survived and was not 'lost at sea' it was



a very lucrative job as one of the Captain's perks was to be able to trade in India to one's own accord. To this already very lucrative position he increased his wealth by marrying another ship's Captain's daughter. He also inherited property in Essex and a considerable amount of money.

When James Hallett died in 1823 at the age of 84 he bequeathed Higham to his nephew: his sister having married an Oxfordshire man by the name of Hughes. The property of Higham was left to Charles Hughes on the condition that he added the name of Hallett to his own name by Deed Poll, within a year and a day.

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## Higham

### The Rev'd Charles Hughes-Hallett

Charles Hughes wasted no time in adding the name Hallett to his own. He had previously been presented with the perpetual curacy of Little Dunmow by his uncle and in 1813 was presented with the Chapel-ancy of Bridge and vicarage of Patricbourne by Edward Taylor of Bifrons. At that time Charles Hughes-Hallett lived at Bridge Place, Bourne Park.

The Archdeanery Court Mandate of Induction Sequestrations and relaxations of 1729-1869, in Canterbury Cathedral Library show the following entry:

"on Receiving a Mandate from his Grace the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury bearing the date twenty-fourth day of February 1813, a Mandate issued forth from the official General of the Archdeacon Court of Canterbury to all and Singular clerks, to instruct the Rev'd. Charles Hughes-Hallett, clerk, Master of curts to the Vicarage of Patricbourne with the Chapel of Bridge, annexed in the Archdeanery of Canterbury late void by the Sequestration of William Taylor, the last incumbent there.



To which he was presented by Edward Taylor Esq., of Bifrons in the County of Kent, the true and undoubted patron thereof."

Charles Hughes - Hallett married Frances Anne, the daughter of Sir Edward Knatchbull 8th bart of Mersham Hatch. Lady Knatchbull was the daughter of John Graham, Lt-Governor of Georgia at the time of the American war of Independence. During the uprising they lost all their plantations and 227 slaves!

Before being involved in a carriage accident which crippled her for the rest of her life, Frances Anne presented her husband with nine children, the eldest of whom followed his father's profession into the church.

The Rev'd. Charles Hughes - Hallett died at the age of 68, on the 10th of May 1846, and was buried beside his wife who had died the previous year on the 14th March at the age of 54. He had held the Vicarage of Patixbourne for 33 years.

Higham then passed to the eldest son, Rev'd. James Hughes - Hallett.

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## Higham.

### 5. The Rev'd. James Hughes-Hallett.

James had been born in 1807 and was the eldest of nine children, several of whom died in their early twenties in various parts of the world. He married the daughter of Gen. Sir Thomas Gage Montresor of Osprige; she had been born 'on the march' in India during the war with the Mahrattas.

On the death of his Uncle, Graham Hughes-Hallett, the Rev'd. James was inducted as vicar of petham with waltham on November 13th, 1837, by his brother-in-law, Sir John Honeywood. The Archbishop made him live at petham for half the year, where he built a house to act as a vicarage. Portraits of Rev'd. James Hughes-Hallett and his wife were painted by the French artist Sanges and were exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1854.

At that time the Higham Estate was very prosperous, in particular the breeding of highland Cattle and pigs. All the water required for the house was drawn from a well, by donkey wheel and a special herd was kept at the farm for this purpose.

The Resurgence at Higham  
owned by Sir Thomas Halyett (1768)



Higham The Manor viewed from the  
main driveway





During the periods when James was resident at Higham he would ride, or drive his trap to Pertham for the Sunday Services, stopping over for lunch with friends so that he could take the evening prayers.

The Hughes - Halletts of Higham seemed to be of very strong stock. James remained Master of the hunt until at the age of 84 a sudden riding accident while hacking home at dusk, called a halt to his equestrian activities. His sister said his horses whilst he was recovering from the fall. The family strength and will-power is further illustrated by an account from Lt. - Col. N.V. Hughes-Hallett, of Cheltenham, and grandson of James Hughes-Hallett, that one of James' sisters emigrated from Higham to Australia at the age of 93 to go and live with an elder sister.

The Rev'd. James Hughes-Hallett died 3rd Nov. 1901 at the age of 96. Higham was bequeathed to Col. J.W. Hughes-Hallett C.B., C.V.O., D.S.O., of the Seaforth Highlanders. He had no son and was domiciled in Scotland so Higham was put up for 'SALE'

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## Higham

### 6. The Days of William Gay.

Higham was bought by William Gay, a retired London banker with Lays who was married with two sons and two daughters. Apart from farming the estate he took a very keen interest in the adjacent grounds to Higham and indulged in his favourite pastime of growing orchids.

During this period the walled garden was constructed and many types of fruit were grown, including grapes and figs. A qualified team of gardeners were employed and no expense spared.

Mrs. L.M. Crookenden, widow of the late Col. Crookenden of Barham, and only surviving child of William Gay, recalls her childhood at Higham as being happy but very much according to Victorian etiquette which still lingered on.

Her father owned a much prized herd of pedigree Highland Cattle which roamed the estate, and she recalls one occasion when 'Hopkins' the Bailiff was taking a white bull to be slaughtered, at the local butchers; the bull had other ideas and tossed the Bailiff over the church



wall before making off down the village high street, causing great fluster amongst the villagers.

Mrs. Crookenden's mother was of French ancestry and this had some influence on the decor and furnishings of the house. She enjoyed entertaining and had a wide circle of influential friends; one of these being Countess Zborowski who lived opposite in Bridge Hill House. As a girl Mrs. Crookenden remembers being taken for tea with the charming countess and instantly disliking a young pale-looking boy called Louis. Also always in the background was the formidable figure of Miss. Hodges, the Countess' companion.

It was the friendship between the Countess and Mrs. Gay that was to lead to Higham being sold once again. The Countess had set her heart on buying the property from the Gay family and any objections raised were soon overcome by the Countess' charm.

Mrs Crookenden still has in her possession a dolls house, originally made for the Hallett family as an exact replica of Higham, which

must be over 150 years old.

## Higham.

### 7 Countess Zborowski and young Louis Voraw

When Margaret Countess Zborowski first came to Bridge she set her heart on buying Higham and used all her charm to persuade the Gays family to sell the property. When the purchase was complete she set down plans for the whole house to be transformed. Unfortunately she never lived to see her dreams come true as she died of influenza just before the work on the house was completed.

Margaret was the wealthy granddaughter of William Astor and shortly after her marriage to Baron Alphonse de Sues had ended in divorce she married Count Eliott Zborowski. He was of Polish / American ancestry and had inherited much capital from his father who had been one of the early settlers in the Eastern United States and had extensive property in New York and New Jersey.

To say that Count Eliott Zborowski was somewhat of a character would be an understatement. Tradition demanded that no



Self-respecting Zborowski ever died with his bedsocks on. Elliott lived up to this tradition with full verve and vigour. His penchant for abandoned horseriding, polo playing and general zest for living gave credence to the tales that after an evening's drinking he rode his stallion up the main staircase at Caventry House, Melton Mowbray. Needless to say good manner and breeding prevented him taking the horse further than the bedroom door.

Into this warm, fun-loving high Society Louis Vorow Zborowski was born on the 20th of February 1895. The boy grew up with many friends, two of whom were Lord Limerick's children, Viscount Glentworth and Lady Victoria. The children spending many happy holidays together at Dramore Castle in Ireland.

Louis listened with interest to his father's account of his apparent casual participation in the Great Paris to Vienna, motor race in June 1902, and which he would have won but for a French adjudicator's decision against him. Cars now completely filled the Count's life. The Stables at Melton Mowbray were closed and the horses sold. From now

on the Count's attention was completely captivated by the large noisy monsters which had been described by the Victorians as being an outrage to all decent living beings.

The Carefree world to which young Louis had become accustomed was shattered when he was eight years old when his mother returned from Nice with the news that his father had been killed in an automobile accident on the Grand Corniche Road. It was believed that his gold cuff-links had caught in the throttle lever on the steering column; throwing the Count into the roadside where he sustained a fractured skull. Louis felt very deeply the loss of his father and when he returned from the funeral at Burton Lazars the prospect of growing up under the care of two women - his mother and her companion, Miss Beatrix Hodges, did not bear thinking about.

After his father died, the house at Melton Mowbray was sold, the Countess, Louis and Miss Hodges moved to London. The Countess' health suffered with the London air and so they moved to Bridge Hill house, Bodge. The adjacent estate of Higham immediately



attracted the attention of Margaret Laura Zborowski and she was determined to persuade the Gay family to sell her the property. The Countess achieved her ambition in buying the house, but sadly just before the finishing touches to her 'dream House' were completed, she died of influenza.

Once again Louis made the journey to Burton Lazars cemetery where the countess was laid beside her husband. The young Count Louis was just sixteen when he moved to Higham with Miss Hodges and the rest of the household.

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## Higham.

### 3 Count Louis von Zborowski

At the age of sixteen Count Louis Zborowski moved into the Higham estate. He was extremely wealthy, his father left him eight million pounds and his mother three million pounds.

He attended King's school, Canterbury where it is not actually recorded that he was expelled by all accounts though they were not sorry he left. Louis had a flair for languages, an inborn mechanical ability and an appreciable artistic talent, the latter being suppressed by his tutors as being considered effeminate. Tutors came and went. He spent a term at Eton and tried University life, but all failed. He was a natural intellect but his eccentric personality eventually became the downfall of all attempts of classical forms of education.

The young Count turned to cars for solace. The cars on the estate discouraged spirited driving due to the heavy body work so with the aid of some friends he transformed one of these by fitting a sporting light-weight coachwork. A local firm of Bligh



Bros. was co-opted into helping and also professional advice was sought at the Weighbridge Coachworks of Gordon Watney.

At this stage the Counts interest in machinery was not limited to cars alone. He developed a keen passion for aeroplanes and engines and had an aeroplane hangar at nearby Beeston aerodrome. Actual flying had little if any appeal. It is recorded that he remarked to his friends C.G. Le champion 'I find flying utterly boring', and so aeroplanes were left to be ragged and flown by his employees. Also moored at Faversham Creek was a boat fitted with a Mercedes engine, but again interest dwindled quickly. Motorcycles were purchased from local Canterbury shops and ridden with gay abandon through the estate and surrounding countryside, raising many a scornful eye from villagers.

One of his companions at this time was T. H. Lawrence, later Lawrence of Arabia. Another was his friend from King's school days, the ex. Sandhurst cadet, Clive Gallop who was to become a permanent part of the Higham scene for a number of years.

which was knocked up by Bligh Bros. of Canterbury; a firm with whom the Count had financial interests and under whose trade plates Chitty was first driven.

In 1921 Easter event at Brooklands race track saw Chitty make her debut, causing an immediate sensation. Zborowski and his renegade of engineering friends clad in loud checked palm Beach caps, started his monstrous car with the aid of half-axle from an aeroplane, compression device and someone furiously winding the starting magnets was a slight no Brooklands habitué cared to miss.

Zborowski was cautious. He knew that much would be expected of his 23 like home-built car and that if it failed as a racing car he could become a laughing stock. He did not expect the handicaps to treat him lightly. As handling had previously proved difficult at Speed 7 car. of Sand was placed at the back of the body in order to keep the wheels in contact with the ground throughout the race.

Chitty was awarded 78 seconds from the nearest rival, a Frenchman, Andre Boulet in a



Sunbeam. On the second lap Chitty increased her lead, lapping at 108.15 m.p.h. This was Chitty's first victory. The bookies took 6 to 4 on Zbarowski, 4 to 1 on the field. Chitty one two further events that day and came second behind the Count's 4 1/2 litre Mercedes driven by a friend. No Easter egg would have matched the Sweet Success War monkey.

Flushed with a feeling of success the Count returned to Higham. The car had behaved well and deserved further development and refinement. The Zenith Carburetors were replaced with three Claudel-Hobsons, each with its own two-branch manifold and outside pipe. Moreover the 'kumby' body was removed and guards were fitted above the exterior driving shafts. All was completed for the Whitsun race meeting at Brooklands.

With a ten second start in the Lightning Short Handicap, Chitty won easily, lapping at 111.29 m.p.h. and averaging 102.6 m.p.h. A re-handicap for the next race proved too much for this magnificent machine, despite a lap speed of 113 m.p.h. and approaching 123 m.p.h. down the straight. A cowl had been fitted over the radiator but this fell off; the petrol tank also

As his personality developed so did his love of practical jokes, and bizarre ideas. It was not unknown for him to booby-trap the rose garden with small explosive devices in order to catch unexpected visitors admiring the gardeners' handiwork. This was much to the honor of Ted Mansell the Head Gardener. It was also commonplace for him to use the Garden Statues for target practice or the front courtyard as a firing range.

The now famous Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Light Railway had its beginnings at Higham. The original narrow gauge track being salvaged from Jackson's scrapyard in Golden Square, Canterbury and laid at Higham. A beautifully built locomotive designed by Sir Nigel Gresley and named 'The Green Goddess' hauled house guests and shooting parties around the estate. When the estate was sold after the Count's death the railway was bought by Capt. Howie and Lee Guinness and laid in its present position. The 'Green Goddess' is still a major item of the present day rolling stock.

Louis was also an early exponent of 'mad' movies. Trains featuring in many of them. He would be one of his main lady friends



to the Railway line and with the assistance of his friend the chief engineer, Len Martin would arrange a dramatic rescue in the gallant manner just as the train was approaching. The whole episode being captured on film to be shown later at one of the many parties. Len Martin recalls one incident when a specially constructed building was set on fire with the attention of Louis galloping through the inferno complete with en femme. On this occasion the stunt almost failed and they escaped with a very narrow margin of safety. Unfortunately all the films were destroyed after the Count's death in 1924, apparently his widow did not wish to be reminded of these escapades.

At the start of the 1914-18 war Louis volunteered his services, but much to his disappointment was refused admission to the armed forces. The direct reason was never revealed, but it may have been something to do with his Polish ancestry - Zborowski not sounding quite right for an Army officer. However not to be excluded completely, he worked on the 'home front' by turning over the coachworks, of which he was a director, to the manufacture of artillery wheels. Many

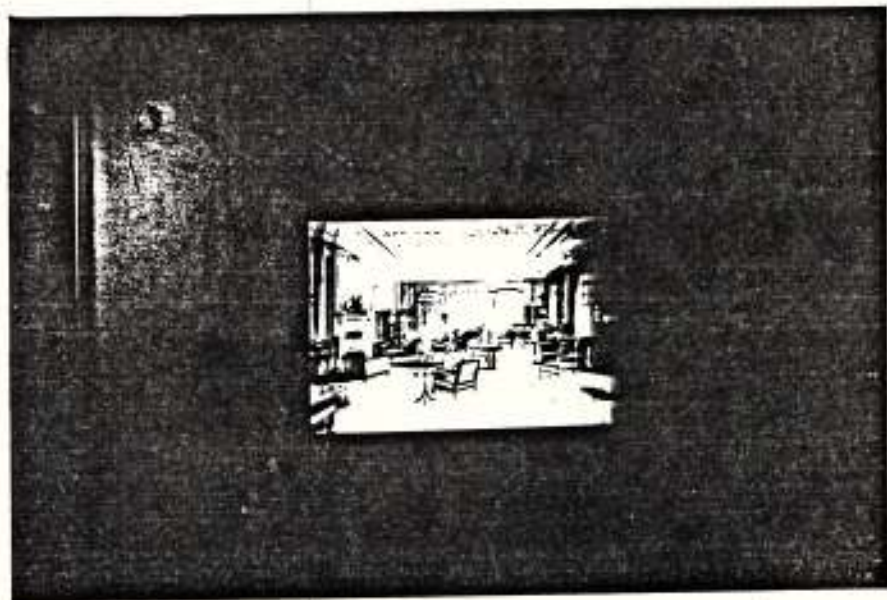
acres of pasture land also came under the plough in an effort to produce more food crops. Another of the Counts' 'war efforts' was to fit a search light to one of his high-powered cars, ostensibly to watch the Dover road for enemy infiltrators, but enjoying every minute of the foot night driving.

In keeping with his playboy image, and the family tradition, a high-society social life developed at Higham. Many pretty girls from the theatre attended Higham Champagne parties; one of whom was Phyllis Monkman, the star of 'The Bing Boys'.

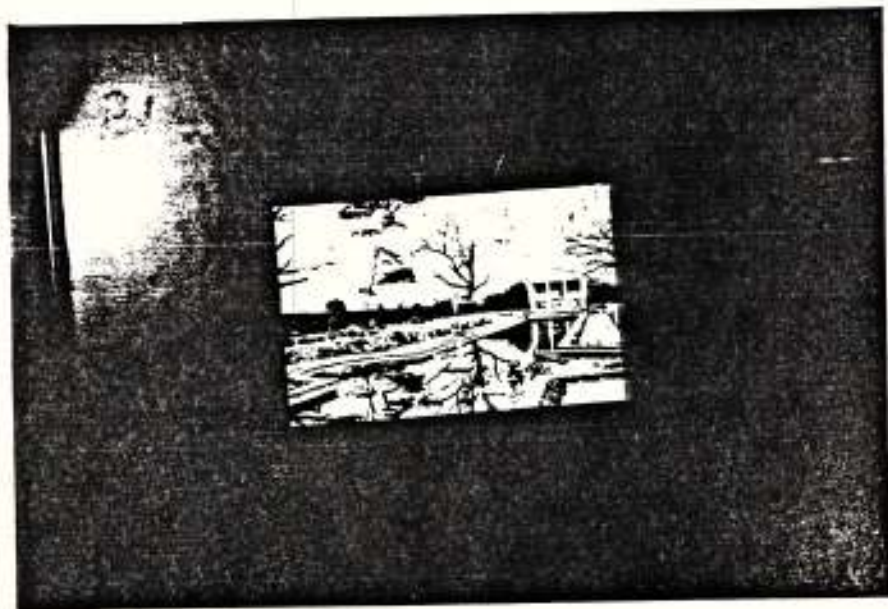
Louis eventually married an American show-girl, Violet Ethel Leicester and she became Countess Zborowski in 1919, honeymooning on the Thames at Wallingford. For the first Christmas at Higham as Count and Countess, the housekeeper, Mrs. Dixon was requested to draw up a list of all the 'servants' and estate workers' families. A grand Christmas Ball was arranged with bands coming down from London, and the very best food and wine. It was a great success and so became an annual event until 1923.



The main Salon when  
was in residence



The large enclosed pond

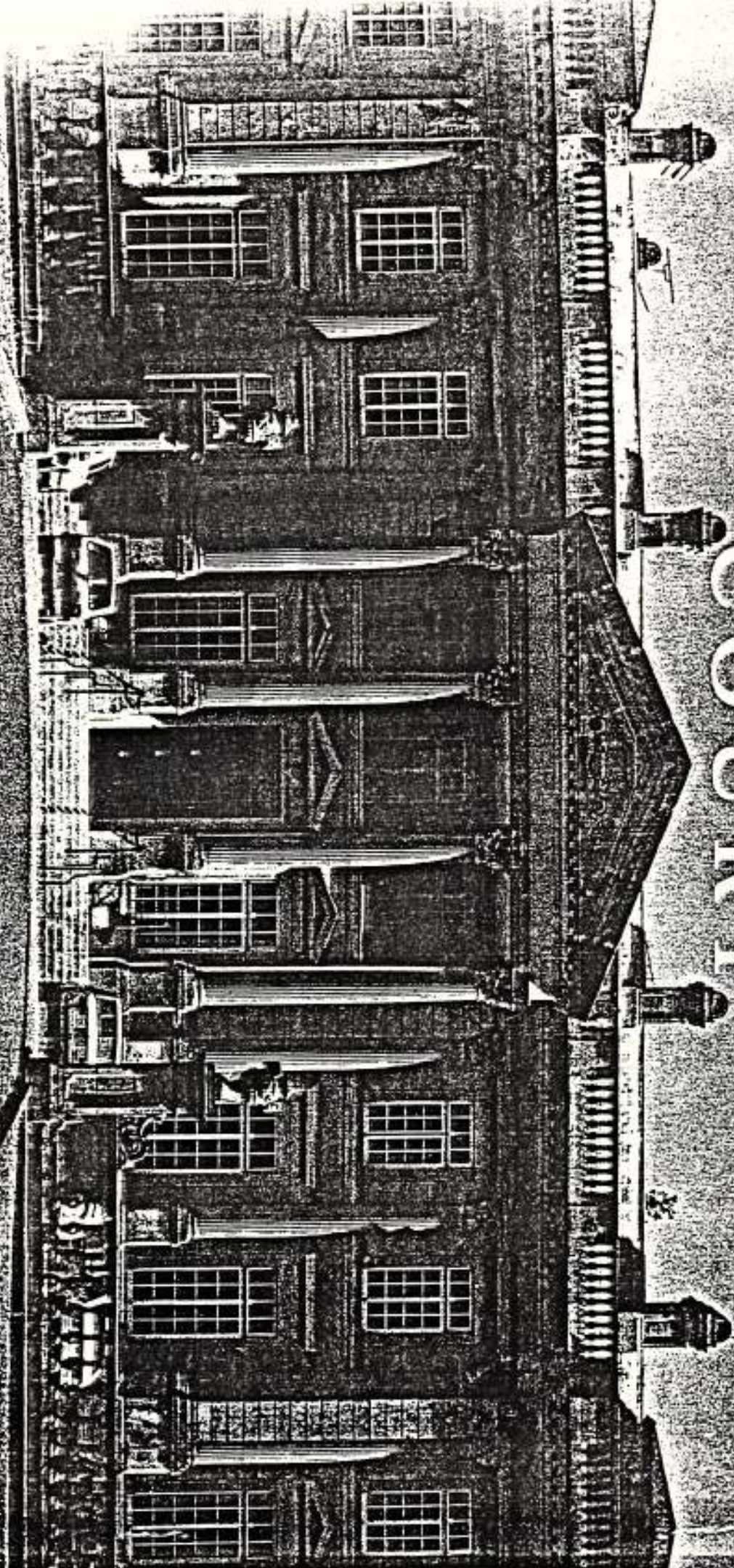






By Order of the South East Thames Regional Health Authority  
on behalf of the Secretary of State for Social Services

# HIGHLAND HIGGOURT



BRIDGE NR GANLEFBURY KENT FREEHOLD FOR SALE



These events are still recalled by elderly local villagers and while talking to some of them another facet of the Count's character became apparent. Evidently at the last of these grand balls he raised his champagne glass to toast the estate workers; as his glass clinked it shattered which the Count took to be an ill omen. He immediately retreated to his bedroom and did not speak to anyone for a week. The following year he was tragically killed.

The Count's generosity is recalled in an article written by David A. Payne, which appeared in Veteran and Vintage Magazine in December 1969. In 1920 the Count, on hearing the laments of the local fire officer about his aged horse-drawn appliance being too slow to reach the outlying village fires in time to be of any use, offered the Brigade a Pillion racing chassis complete with engine and Dick near Suspension. His coachbuilders were commissioned to build a suitable body to comfortably accommodate ten men and a mile of hose. This superb 75hp. engine could develop speeds of 60 m.p.h. and could also haul a steam pump if necessary and was probably the fastest engine of its type in the country.

What other village could boast such equipment? In recognition of his generosity the Lieut Colonel bestowed upon the Count the honorary title of Captain of the Brigade bestowed upon the Count the honorary title of Captain of the Brigade which he proudly retained until his death. His generosity was appreciated and known by all but at one time his debts had accumulated to such an extent that Higham was mortgaged for £10,000.

Although a millionaire, money could not always obtain what he Count wanted. William James Pierie who lived in London Road, Canterbury was Veterinary Surgeon to the Zbarowski estate and had taught the Count to shoot as a young lad. After one particularly well-reviving for the Count, he asked him to name his price for the dog, but was told that it wasn't for sale.

It was with shocked dismay that the estate workers heard of the death of the Count. He had died tragically from a fractured skull sustained while racing at Monza. His body was brought back to Dover, then to Higham and finally to its resting place with his parents at Burgh Lazars, to the tune of his favourite hymn (Lead kindly light). He died on October 19th, 1924 at the age of 29.





— 'Prince' my Grandfather's  
Dog, even a millionaire  
couldn't buy him.

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It was the end of an era the like of which  
Highcum was never to see again

## 9. The Chitty Chitty Bang Bang

Probably the most famous car of all time was first envisaged and built at Higham. Louis Zborowski's love of large, fast engines led him to design and build the now legendary Chitty Chitty Bang Bang. Immortalised by Ian Fleming in a book of the same name, but bearing little resemblance to the original car, written when living in the nearby village of Bekesbourne.

At the end of the first world war the Aircraft Disposal Co. advertised 30,000 surplus aero-engines for sale at Wadding Airpark (later Croydon Airpark). One of these was a six cylinder, 23,093 c.c. Maybach engine capable of developing just over 300 h.p.

This enormous engine was coked into a specially lengthened Mercedes chassis. In order to retain all the Mercedes characteristics so loved by the Count the radiator and scroll clutch were retained. In fashion with the times the car was given a painted prow for good air penetration, despite of the enormous drag of the big radiator and primitive bodywork. Chitty was the nature of an experiment and was first given a crude four seater body which



Split as the flexible chassis rode the Brooklands bumps, necessitating Chittys withdrawal from any further events that day.

The combination of Zborowski's temperament and Chittys construction was bound to lead to eventual success, but this was not to be in 1921 Brooklands Summer meetings. Hartford Shock absorbers were fitted to Chittys to keep the back wheels down, but this only gave the car a curiously lolling appearance as she went round the track. In the Lightning Short Handicap Chittys achieved second place to Swain's G.P. Vauxhall, but was handicapped completely out of the Lightning Long Race. Although winning appeared to Zborowski's flamboyant nature he judged Chittys not so much by her track performance but by the fact that he greatly enjoyed driving this magnificent car on the near deserted roads of Kent.

By late Summer of 1921 an improved version known as Chittys II was nearing completion in the Hojham workshops. Chittys II followed the same general lines as Chittys I but with a shorter wheelbase. Using the same type of pre-war (probably 1918

Mercedes chain driven chassis, an 18.882 c.c. Benz aeroplane was fitted. This car had been conceived rather as an exciting road car than for the track.

Having missed appearing at the August Brooklands meeting, although Chitty II had been included in the programme, Zborowski decided to enter both cars in the Autumn meeting. Unfortunately good fortune included them. The smaller car proved undergeared for the track and had too severe a handicap to overcome, having to give Major Seagraves' 3-litre Junkers 8 seconds start in the 100 m.p.h. Short handicap and 12 seconds in the 8 1/2 mile version of the race. This was Chitty II's only appearance as a track car. It managed to lap at 108.27 mph. but was never raced at Brooklands again. Nevertheless Zborowski had every reason to be pleased with his first excursion into the realm of fantastic motorcars. The Curans were here to stay.

During 1922 Zborowski drove Chitty II across France to Algeria followed by a white Mercedes to carry the luggage. Following a stay at Nergresco Hotel, Nice, Zborowski



# The legendary car that inspired a book and film

Chitty makes the head lines (1946)

ONE of the most famous racing cars of a near half century ago is to be found in Deal. It thrilled speed enthusiasts in the 1920s, and inspired the late Ian Fleming to break away from Bond and write a book for children. Now that book, titled "Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang," has become a musical film starring Sally Ann Howes and Dick van Dyke.

Chitty - Chitty - Bang-Bang is owned by Mr. Peter Harris-Mayes, a 39-year-old master butcher, who lives in London Road, Deal. The story of how Mr. Harris-Mayes found and restored the historic car is a romance in itself.

Mr. Harris-Mayes discovered the car, mile-deep in mud, on a farm at Salton, near Dover. Grass was growing on her bonnet and chickens were roosting in her seats.

The owner, Dover garage proprietor Mr. William Hollis, gave him the car.

## Desert tour

Mr. Harris-Mayes spent the next 10 years restoring Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang to her original glory. Every available moment of his spare time went on the car — and plenty of cash too.

Since then, Mr. Harris-Mayes has travelled more than 1,000 miles in Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang, and has taken part in national speed trials and safety rallies.

Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang was designed and made by the late Count Louis Zborowski who lived at Higham — now named Higham Court — near Canterbury.

The Count raced the giant car at Brooklands, where he lapped at 113 miles an hour, and also took it on a tour of the Sahara, venturing more than 150 miles into the heart of the desert.

## Scrapped

It is powered by a 200 h.p. Benz engine on a lengthened Mercedes chassis, and is chain driven. The Benz engine is the same as those used to power the giant German Gotha bombers of the First World War.

It has six cylinders and

four valves per cylinder, operated by exposed push-rods and rocker gear.

Exhaust gases leave via a huge expansion chamber on the star-side of the bonnet, to which the large-bore exhaust pipe is attached, without any clamp rings; this pipe drooping, to disappear under the chassis.

The sump was scrapped by Count Zborowski when he made Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang to provide ground clearance. Lubricating oil is contained in a long, stream-lined tank below the off-side chassis side member.

The crankcase has transverse cooling tunnels running through it, and to steady this great power unit to it rocks under idling torque, a metal strip passes under it from side members of the chassis.

A "WIPAC" water pump is driven from the front of the crankshaft and mounted vertically. The drive goes through the Mercedes scroll clutch to the original Mercedes gearbox. Final drive is from a countershaft and exposed side chains.

## Killed

The weight of the car is about 30 cwt, and it is 17ft. long. The engine develops 240 h.p. at around 1,300 r.p.m. to give it terrific acceleration, especially up hills.

This fine vehicle, which does only seven miles to the gallon, retains its original number plate, 974 2220.

Count Zborowski was killed at Monza while racing in the Italian Grand Prix of 1924, driving a Mercedes straight eight.

The Count was a speed enthusiast, and the fact that his father had been killed driving a 50 h.p. Mercedes in a hill climb at the

beginning of the century, did nothing to daunt him.

The Count inherited a fortune, and he spent most of it on racing cars which he designed, built and drove himself.

## Pranks

The Count was a typical product of the gay 20s, a man who could have walked from the pages of "Bopper" or Dornford Yates. He was very rich and very brave. And he was wild and full of schoolboy pranks.

Count Zborowski, who was of Polish origin, was well-known throughout East Kent in the early 30s. He went to Elton, and soon afterwards began building racing cars.

He transformed the sleepy countryside at Higham and around Canterbury. Villagers considered that world happen next. For as well as being a car racing enthusiast, Count Zborowski had a passion for explosives.

Once a bathing party at Higham was abruptly ended when an underwater explosion wrecked the pool and demolished most of the summerhouse!

One of the Count's favourite pastimes was to assemble members of his household in the garage and let them choose one of the fantastic cars!

## Restored

They could have had a Benz, a Mercedes, an Hispano-Suiza, a Bugatti or Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang. Then they would take part in a thrilling road race to Dover and back.

Count Zborowski and his American-born wife used Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang extensively as a touring car. Their excursion deep into the Sahara ended only when all the cooling water boiled away!

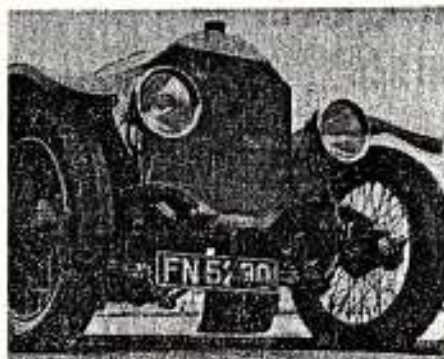
He took part in the great Indianapolis Race of 1923, and put much money into Aston-Martin, at that time in financial difficulties.

He died when his Mercedes straight eight went into a skid and crashed into a tree. Since then he has become a legend.

Mr. Harris-Mayes spent over £200 on the restoration of Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang and he says it's been worth every penny.

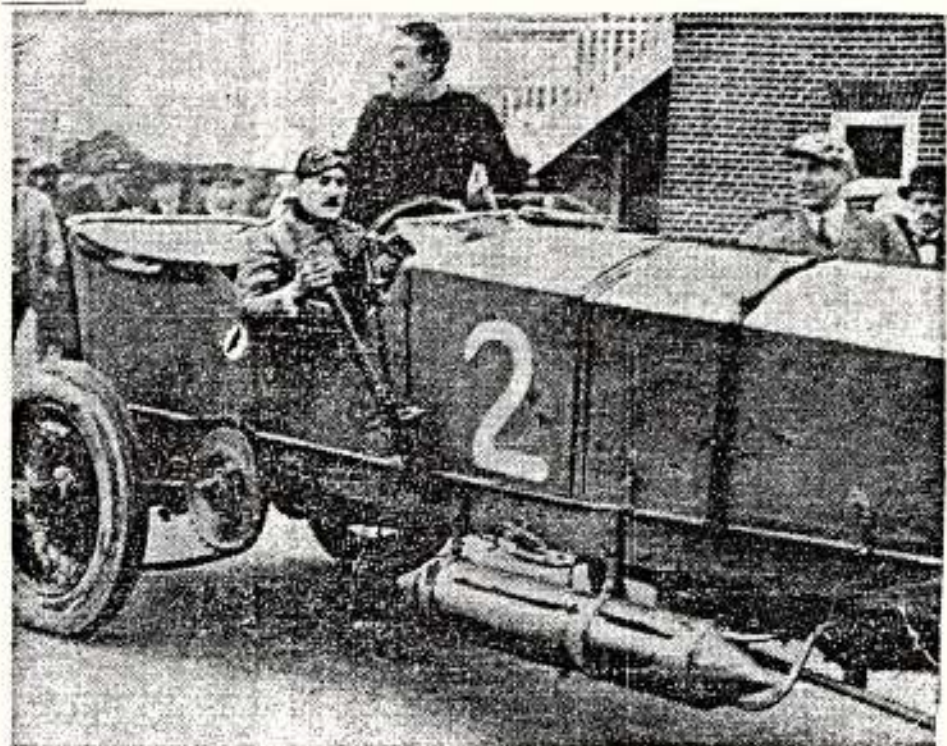
"Time and money spent on the restoration of this fine car is nothing. It has been a labour of love."

"Chitty - Chitty - Bang - Bang," which is set in East Kent, is published by Jonathan Cape.



HARRIS-MAYES at the wheel of Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang





COUNT LOUIS ZBOROWSKI at the wheel of Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang before the start of a Brooklands race.

Count Zborowski in  
his car 'Chitty Chitty  
Bang Bang'

and his party drove some 250 miles south of Biskra on the fringe of the Sahara Desert where a close call to disaster was only just averted. Chittys radiator boiled dry just as the parties' water supply was at its lowest level.

Before returning to England Ziarnowski and his companion major Clive Callop drove up to Shastaung in order to view the Grand Prix circuit where the French Grand Prix would be run later that year, both having entered cars for this event.

The Count had previously imported from Germany a 28/95 Mercedes chassis equipped with a sketchy test body, a six cylinder overhead camshaft engine, a direct third gear in its four gear box speed and a somewhat rudimentary four-wheeled braking system. This was to be the basis of Chittys III, but always known as the "White Mercedes". The original 7-litre engine removed (and eventually found its way into a boat). The chassis was lengthened and a six cylinder 14,778 c.c. Mercedes aeroengine fitted. At what time engines of this nature could be easily obtained for as little as £30.



Westinghouse were approached for a new braking system, and with a complete new body, Chitty II became a comparatively modern shaft driven car if still somewhat large for the year 1923.

Dunne's 1922 a scarcity of tyres made it essential to limit track events for Chitty type cars. However Chitty I entered and won the Southsea Speed Trials at an average speed of 73.10 m.p.h. In September 1922 Zborowski had intended to resume racing at the Brooklands track. Unfortunately disaster struck during a fast practice lap when an offside front tyre burst, while climbing the banking, turning round as she did so, went backwards through the wooden banking but at the beginning of the mile, tore off her front axle and came to rest upright a considerable distance away. The riding mechanic Ken Martin, was thrown out and badly shaken. Zborowski stayed in his seat and escaped serious injury. One official, Chamberlain, had three fingers amputated as Chitty smashed through the banking box. (The poor unfortunate fellow was later killed in a similar accident but involving motorbikes.) Another official, Cann, saw the car go out of control and stopped



into a ditch, Chittys passing over his head without doing him any harm. That was Chittys I's last appearance Brooklands.

By 1924 Zborowski had become a team driver for Mercedes and all his visits to Unterhorkheim were made in Chittys III. Chittys III was entered as a "Mercedes" in the Brooklands Winton meeting of 1924 in the private Competitors Handicap, indicative of the fact that Zborowski still remained. He lapped out 93.02 m.p.h. but was unplaced. However this proved to be merely a 'warm-up' for the short handicap Gold Vase event when Chittys lapped the track at 104.63 m.p.h. and won by a  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mile. At the Summer Brooklands meeting Chittys III was brought out again for the short handicap and Lightning honey handicap; to be pipped to the post in events by Parny Thomas in a Leyland-Thomas Special, breaking all Brooklands' speed records. This surely was to be Zborowski's last appearance at Brooklands.

Back at Highnam two other cars were under construction. One was never completed, but the other was notorious and known as the 'Highnam Special'. A primitive chassis

Frame carried a war-time Liberty V12 aeroengine and was the biggest power unit to ever race at Brooklands. The 27-litre engine was matched with a gearbox from 200.h.p. Benz with chain drive and stub axles of a 1908 Grande Prix Mercedes, finished with a two-seater body. It has a brief but sensational career. After the death of Curt Zborowski it was bought by Pamy Thomas for £125 who renamed it 'Babs'. In April 1926 he made a bid for the land speed record on the flats at Pendine, South Wales. All was going well and he had already beaten Seagrave's previous record by 20 m.p.h. by notching up 171.02 m.p.h. on the previous run, when on a last attempt to improve upon this speed the chain snapped, looping up and killing the driver instantly.

The car was entombed in the sand under the Golf course at Pendine, where it remained until 1969 when Professor O. Wyn Owen exhumed the car and completely restored it. In 1976 'Babs' was again driven over the flat sand at Pendine at a somewhat leisurely pace, to mark the fifteenth anniversary of Pamy Thomas' record attempt.



Only one Chittip Shil remains in existence, this is Chittip II. After Zbonarski's death it was thought to have been bought by a Mr. A. Fowler for £825, but later became part of the stock of Dawid Scott - Moncrieff who had commenced selling horseless carriages to the nobility and gentry of the late twenties. Mr. William Earl Hollis of Dorset bought Chittip hibernated in the corner of the farmyard for more than 20 yrs.

A young lad of 17, while collecting chickens from the farm for the family butchers shop in Deal, took an interest in the old wrecked car. Hollis told him that if he could get the car hived away he could have it. Completely unaware of the car's historical past and her previous owner he began a task which was to take every spare moment of his life for the next ten years and cost him thousands of pounds. The meticulous restoration of Chittip Chittip Banep Banep II had begun. Peter Harris Mayers is a quiet, sensitive man with a unique devotion to the restoration of beautiful cars. Chittip II was in his possession for 25 years. During this time the car made various appearances in various showrooms as a centrepiece, appeared



on T.V. and helped to raise money for the children at Guy's hospital. It was only due to the financial burden of the two horn monster that forced Mr. Harris Mayers to decide to sell her in 1968. The road tax at this time, based on the cubic capacity of the engine, was £35. per quarter year, plus the fact that 11 m.p.g. was the best fuel consumption ever obtained.

She was put up for sale and bought for £16,500 by an American, Mr. M. Rivnick of Etendale, New York. Unfortunately when the sale was announced in the press a controversy arose over rightful ownership and Chitty spent the next year in a protracted case awaiting shipment to the States.

Mr. Hollis (on whose farm Chitty had been allowed to rot) declared that he had never officially given the car to Peter Harris Mayers and that it should not have been sold without his permission. Accordingly to add to his collection at Beaulieu and offered Mr. Hollis £4,000 for the car if he won legal ownership; he also made the plea that the car should not leave Britain. At the end of a three day hearing in a London High

Court, Peter Harris Mayers won the day and soon after Chitthip at last began her journey to the States. She has since changed ownership and is part of a private collection.

The Name Chitthip Chitthip Bang Bang still lives on, originally taken, not as we were led to believe in the film produced by Chubby Broccoli, and starring Dick Van Dyke, as the noise made by the exhaust, but from the somewhat lewd musical songs of the period, the word of which, like the singer, have long been forgotten. The legendary Chitthip Chitthip Bang Bang and her young millionaire creator belongs to a distant age, the like of which we will never see again.

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Murri Hall



10. From Higham to Highland  
Court.

After Court Zborowski's death a sudden quiet fell over the estate and once more cattle grazed in the parkland undisturbed by the monstrous cars travelling at high speed up the driveway.

During the four years in which it took the Court's Estate Administrator, George Gosline's plan to finalise the sale of Higham, it was leased to a county farmer from Denham, Albert William Goldup, for £150 rent per annum.

Finally on Tuesday, 31st July 1928, Higham was put up for sale at the London Auction Mart, Victoria Street, London by John D. Wood & Co. It was described in the brochure as "The well-known and most attractive residential and sporting property of Higham; a fine classic mansion in a finely timbered park."

The house, parkland and home farmland were bought by Walter Kennedy Wigham of the Highland Investment Co. Ltd. of Crosby Square, London for the sum of £17,500 on the 31st July 1928.

After moving in with his new bride,



a French Countess from the Salignac Fenelon family, he changed the name of the house to Highland Court. They did not wish to be dubbed the 'Whighams of Higham' and thought Highland Court more appropriate.

Walter Whigham and his wife had four sons, Walter Jr., Francis, Geoffrey (who died at the age of eight) and Bernard. Mr. Bernard Whigham recalls that the cellars were used as playrooms and a Hornby Railway Set laid out, so that the children could play without disturbing the rest of the household. Private tutors were employed for the children (the room that had served as a dining room for the resident was the school room.) At Christmas large parties were held and all the children from the village visited the house.

Highland Court mansion and its adjoining farm provided many jobs for the local villagers. Many of the estate workers from Zbonowski's time had remained, one in particular who returned to act as chauffeur to Walter Whigham was Ken Martin who had been Zbonowski's riding mechanic. Many of the village girls started their working life as housemaids at the mansion house.

and married estate workers or Gardeners.

The Highland Court Investment Co. LTD expanded the farm and in 1930 new farm buildings and a new dairy were built. Also built about this time were new stables introduced adjacent to the house. Mr Bernard Whigham also said that grapes were grown on a fairly large scale for wine making, unfortunately all attempts at wine culture in latter years have always been failed by pheromone eating the fruit before maturation.

Mr Whigham became a well known and respected member of the Kentish Society. He was twice Sheriff of Kent, but his main patronage was the Hospital Management Committee for Byears and was host to princess Marina when she visited Canterbury in 1935 to lay the foundation stone of the New Kent and Canterbury Hospital. In recognition of this work of his a ward in the New Hospital was named after him. hence 'Whigham Ward'.

In 1936 a Cricket ground was added adjacent to the grounds at the back of the house. (later in the mid-fifties a



pseudo-Tudor pavilion was added and Highland Court Cricket Club held many fixtures here during the season. Many ex-tent players number among the regular members of the team.)

Early in 1940 Mrs Whigham died, but the family had already moved to a smaller house in Beckenbourne where Mr. Whigham continued to live for the duration of the war.

During the war years Highland Court mansion was taken over by the war Department and was Brigade Headquarters for the London Scottish Regiment. It is believed that when Field Marshall Montgomery visited the HQs shortly before D-Day he was recorded as having remarked on the luxurious quarters.

Mr Whigham remarried in 1943, and a further son David and a daughter Cynthia were born. After the war ended they returned to Higham for a short period until Mr Whigham's death in 1968 when the house was offered as and to the Regional Hospital Board as an annexe to Kent and Canterbury Hospital.

In the early Sixties when Highland Court Investment Co. LTD. were again expanding



the farm, it necessitated demolishing the old farmhouse estate. A large well was discovered and it is believed that this may have been the original well worked by Donkeys to provide water for the whole estate.

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## 11. From Private House to Hospital Annexe

In 1968 when Mr. Walter Whigham, President of Kent and Canterbury Hospital Management Committee for 13 years, died, Highland Court was offered to the Regional Hospital Board as an addition to Kent and Canterbury Hospital. The project was then submitted to the Authorities and here followed protracted negotiations through the District Valuer, but the Hospital Management Committee were determined that as far as possible they would obtain Highland Court. They had the support of the Chairman of the Regional Board as a result, the building was finally acquired.

The plans for its adaption to a hospital were drawn up by Mr. Cecil Burns and Mr. Bland who had been responsible for the plans of the main Hospital in Canterbury. The actual cost of acquisition and adaptation was estimated to be approximately £47,000 or £1,000 per bed, including all equipment. It was not possible to adapt the whole house at once and it was therefore planned to carry out the work in two stages. Each stage providing 20-25 beds for gynaecological and ophthalmic patients.



On Thursday, October 18th, 1951 Highland Court was formally opened by Mr. K. I. Julian C.B.E., chairman of the South Eastern Metropolitan Regional Board, Mr. E. J. Mount, chairman of the Hospital Management Committee presided at the ceremony which included a blessing and dedication to its new use, by the hospital Management Committee's chairman now, Rev. R.A.F. Pratt. Hospital nurses formed a guard of honour to welcome the many guests including the mayor and mayress of Canterbury, Councillor and Mrs. S. H. Jennings, The Sheriff and Mrs. J. H. Barrett, and Mrs. Walter Whigham Jr., son of the late owner, together with many V.I.P.'s from the medical profession.

In his welcoming speech Mr Mount spoke of the late former owner of Highland Court and of his valuable service to the hospital. He said that there was probably no use to which Highland Court could have been put that would have pleased Mr. Whigham more than its becoming part of the Kent and Canterbury Hospital. The opening of this Annex, with its well equipped, up-to-date operating theatre would go far in helping to relieve the congestion at



## The Canterbury Hospital.

After the opening ceremony bouquets were presented to the ladies, and all guests were taken on a tour of the Hospital where they admired the wards and spoke to the first four patients. All the visitors were very impressed with the oak ward which in previous years had been the ballroom and echoed the strains of waltzes and the clink of champagne glasses. From this room one appreciates the Sunken garden with its panoramic views of Canterbury beyond, framed by Loveness Oaks and Beeches which make up the 30 acres of gardens surrounding the Hospital. To complete the afternoon's proceedings tea was served under the excellent supervision of Mr. Peter Mason of the County Hotel Catering Service Canterbury.

During the time that Highland Court served as an Annex to the main hospital at Canterbury it was under the control of the Matron Miss Sheehan, and staffed by Nurses and trainees. The General Nursing Council had given its approval for Student Nurses to attend training periods of three months at Highland Court as it was

considered to come under the same structure as Kent and Canterbury Hospital. Sister Sower was in charge of administration, sister Farmer was ward sister and clotheir was night Sister.

Many patients awaking from anaesthetic after operations opened their eyes to see beautiful stick and daub decorated ceilings, or to hear the birdsong drifting in through the open windows. Post operative recuperation must have been aided by strolls in the Sunshine or by sitting by the large enclosed lily pond. The warm friendly atmosphere is still fondly remembered by patients who spent their time in hospital at Highland Court.

The efficient and happy hospital continued its service until in 1968, due to financial costs and an attempt to centralize its units at the main Hospital in Canterbury, it was decided to move the gynaecological unit back to Kent and Canterbury Hospital.

When the door closed after the last patient left, the hospital stood empty for four years until it was re-opened in November 1972.



## 12. A Home for the Mentally Handicapped.

In 1969 the parents of a 2 year old mentally handicapped Canterbury girl complained bitterly to the Kentish Gazette about the conditions at Leybourne Cottage Hospital, Maidstone. After the publicity given to the case by the newspaper the Hospital was visited by the then Minister of Health and Social Security, Baroness Tessa. In time this was followed by a Government enquiry into Hospitals for the mentally handicapped.

The main objective from this enquiry was to reduce overcrowding and to open smaller 'family' units wherever possible. It was to this end that Highland Court was considered. Brockley Rural District Council gave its informal approval to the scheme providing the Hospital management committees, voluntary organisations and any other interested bodies.

It was planned to open Highland Court Hospital as a residence for approximately 50 moderately to light handicapped patients who would not have to rely too heavily on nursing care and would enjoy a fair degree of independence.



A little resentment from local villagers was experienced when the idea was first broached but after one reassurance the idea was accepted. Any worries the villagers might have had, have been proved completely unfounded as the patients from Highland Court are accepted as part of the village scene. They have taken part in Jubilee Celebrations, and won such events as Easter Bonnet Parades etc. The Village primary School issues invitations to the patients whenever they have concerts and are always greeting them with warm welcomes. The Hospital also depends on the help of voluntary workers from the village and also on the help and support of the local branch of the League of Friends.

After months of meetings and discussions, approval was given finally and the work of redecorating and refurnishing the hospital began. It was not until just before Christmas 1972 that Highland Court Hospital again opened its doors to yet another 'family'.

The first six patients, all boys, came during the week commencing 18th December 1972. All but one boy came from Keybourne Cottage Hospital, and he came from Princess Christian's Hospital, Tenbridge. The six original boys are

Still living happily at Highland Court today.

Since its opening many more patients have joined the first few; a further twenty, came the following year and in 1974 a further five. Two more came in 1975 and an additional one each year since. A few have left the hospital to go on to hostel accommodation but any vacancies are quickly filled and there is always a waiting list of patients who need to be accommodated on a full-time basis.

Each month an average of five patients come to the hospital for short term care. These are patients who normally live at home but come into residential care for short periods while parents are on holiday or need a rest. Patients may always be accepted on this basis if an assessment is required by a consultant.

One day patient attends for two days a week so that she can be helped with her education and training, and also so that she can socialise with other residents.

At the hospital patients lead a wide and varied social life within the hospital and



outside. This includes discos, visits to the pub, social events with other hospitals and clubs, holidays in North Wales and trips to the Continent.

Some of the patients go to work in other hospitals, working in the greenhouse and carpentry workshops, while others attend the Adult Training Centre at Cow Lane, Canterbury. In the Occupational Therapy Department at the hospital patients are taught many arts and crafts and also learn cooking, housework and Gardening.

The mansion house may have seen more elegant and extravagant days but never has a family lived so happily at Highland Court. Pop records have taken the place of orchestras from London as in previous eras, but never has so much pleasure been derived as by the mentally handicapped residents living to their full potential.

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# HIGHAM COURT BRIDGE

## I. INTRODUCTION

Highland Court Hospital, formerly named Higham House, is now a residential home for the mentally handicapped, which has a long and varied history. There has been a house on this site for more than 500 years, but the oldest part of the house now standing in this position was built by Ignatious Geoghagan in 1768.

The Rev'd Charles Hughes-Hallett lived in the house for a considerable period, and it served as a vicarage to Patricbourne Church. His son and heir, Rev'd James Hughes-Hallett contrived to live in the house after his father's death, even though his parish was Petham with Waltham.

After the death of the Rev'd James Hughes-Hallett at the age of 84, a London banker with a passion for growing orchids bought the house, but was persuaded to sell to the charming Countess Zborowski.

The unfortunate Countess, after spending a great deal of money converting the house to her own particular tastes, died shortly before the work was completed. Her 16 year old son, count Louis Varow Zrorowski became the most colourful character of all the owners of Higham. It was during this period that the famous 'Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang' car emerged from the garages at Higham.

It took four years to settle the estate after the tragic death of the Count in 1924, and it was not until 1928 that the house was bought by Mr Walter Kennedy Whigham, who after changing the name to Highland Court, lived there (except during the years of the 2nd world war) until 1948.

It was offered to the Regional Hospital Board who in 1951 opened the house as an annexe to Kent and Canterbury Hospital dealing with genealogical and ophthalmic patients. It was closed, due to financial circumstances and centralisation of all units in 1968, and stood empty until 1972.

In November 1972 it opened its doors once again as a hospital, but this time as a residential home for the mentally handicapped patients to live to their full potential in a happy and freindly atmosphere, and it is to be hoped that it will continue to do so for many years.

## 2. THE EARLY DAYS

Research was carried out at County Hall Maidstone, and at the Beany Institute in Canterbury, showed that the mansion house called Higham existed in the North East corner of Patricbourne during the reign of Edward II (1320) and was owned by a family by the name of De Hegham.

The property changed hands many times during the reign of Henry VIII (1543), and Higham was added to the already vast estates of Thomas Culpepper. It then passed to Anthony Aucher, whose descendant Sir William Aucher died without issue in 1726. He bequeathed it to his sister Elisabeth who on her marriage entitled her husband, Thomas Corbett LL.D, possession of the property. Their fourth daughter Antonia married Ignatious Geoghan who in 1768 built the house which stands today. They lived in the house until 1781 when James Hallett Esq. became the new owner.

## 3. JAMES HALLETT ESQ.

At the time of the purchase of Higham, James Hallett owned the manor of Little Dunmow, Essex, which carried with it the right to present the traditional 'Flich of Bacon'. This was a side of bacon awarded each year to the happiest married couple residing within the Parish of Dunmow.

A portrait of James Hallett depicts him as a well-fed and well-dressed wealthy Georgian. Portraits of other members of the Hallett family were painted by Gainsborough: 'The Memory Walk' which hangs in the National Gallery and the 'Hallett Family' painted by the Frenchman Francis Hayman, who was Gainsborough's teacher, is a part of a private collection. According to the Diary written by one of James Hallett's nieces who lived with him, they all lived very graciously in a house filled with the best china, silver and furniture.

James Hallett's father had been the Captain of a ship belonging to the Hon. East India Dock Company. In those days if one survived and was not 'lost at sea' it was a very lucrative job, as one of the Captain's perks was to be able to work in India to one's own accord. To this already very lucrative position he increased his wealth by marrying another ship Captain's daughter. He also inherited property in Essex and a considerable amount of money.



When James Hallett died in 1823 at the age of 84 he bequeathed Higham to his nephew, his sister having married an Oxfordshire man by the name of Hughes. The property of Higham was left to Charles Hughes on the condition that he added the name of Hallett to his own name by Deed Poll within a year and a day.

#### 4. THE REV'D CHARLES HUGHES-HALLETT

Charles Hughes wasted no time in adding the name Hallett to his own. He had previously been presented with the perpetual curacy of Little Dunmow by his Uncle, and in 1813 was presented with the chaplancy of Bridge, and vicarage of Patricbourne by Edward Taylor of Bifrons. At that time Charles Hughes-Hallett lived at Bridge Place, Bourne Park.

The Archdeanery Court Mandate of Inductions Sequestrators and Relaxations of 1729-1869, in Canterbury Cathedral library show the following entry:

"On Receiving a Mandate from his Grace the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury bearing the date twenty fourth day of February 1813, a Mandate issued forth from the Official General of the Archdeacon Court of Canterbury to all and singular Clerks, to instruct the Rev'd Charles Hughes-Hallett, clerk, Master of Arts, to the vicarage of Patricbourne with the chapel of Bridge, annexed in the Archdeanry of Canterbury late void by the Sequestration of William Taylor, the last incumbent there. To which he was presented by Edward Taylor Esq. of Bifro s in the County of Kent, the true and undoubted patron thereof"

Charles Hughes-Hallett married Frances Anne, the daughter of Sir Edward Knatchbull, 8th Baronet of Mersham Hatch. Lady Knatchbull was the daughter of John Graham, Lt. Governor of Georgia at the time of the American War of Independence. During the uprising they lost all their plantations and 227 slaves. Before being involved in a carriage accident which crippled her for the rest of her life, Frances Anne presented her husband with nine children, the eldest of whom followed his father's profession into the Church.

The Rev'd Charles Hughes-Hallett died at the age of 68 on the 10th of May 1846, and was buried beside his wife who had died the previous year on the 14th of March at the age of 54. He had the vicarage of Patricbourne for 33 years. Higham then passed to the eldest son, the Rev'd James Hughes-Hallett.



## 5. THE REV'D JAMES HUGHES-HALLETT

James had been born in 1807 and was the eldest of nine children, several of whom died in their early twenties in various parts of the world. He married the daughter of Gen. Sir Thomas Gage Montresor of Ospringe, who had been born 'on the march' in India during the War with the Mahrattas.

On the death of his Uncle, Graham Hughes-Hallett, the Rev'd James was inducted as vicar of Pethamwith-Waltham on November 13th 1837, by his brother-in-law Sir John Honeywood. The Archbishop made him live at Petham for half the year, where he built a house to act as the vicarage. Portraits of Rev'd James Hughes-Hallett and his wife were painted by the French artist Sanges, and were exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1854.

At that time the Higham estate was very prosperous, in particular the breeding of Highland cattle and pigs. All the water required for the house was drawn from a well by donkey wheel, and a special herd was kept at the farm for this purpose.

During the periods when James was resident at Higham he would ride, or drive his trap to Petham for the Sunday services, stopping over for lunch with friends so that he could take the evening prayers.

The Hughes-Halletts of Higham seemed to be of very strong stock. James remained Master of the Hunt until at the age of 84 a sudden riding accident while hacking home at dusk called a halt to his equestrian activities. His sister sold his horses while he was recovering from the fall. The family strength and willpower is further illustrated by an account from Lt.Col. N.V. Hughes-Hallett of Cheltenham, and grandson of Charles Hughes-Hallett, that one of James' sisters emigrated from Higham to Australia at the age of 93 to go and live with an elder sister.

The Rev'd James Hughes-Hallett died on the 3rd of November 1901 at the age of 96. Higham was bequeathed to Col. J.W. Hughes-Hallett CB,CVO,DSO, of the Seaforth Highlanders. He had no son and was domiciled in Scotland, and so Higham was put up for sale.

## 6. THE DAYS OF WILLIAM GAY

Higham was bought by William Gay, a retired London banker with Lloyds who was married with two sons and two daughters. Apart from farming the estate, he took a very keen interest in the grounds adjacent to Higham, and indulged in his favourite pastime of growing orchids. During this period the walled garden was constructed and many types of fruit were grown, including grapes and figs. A qualified team of gardeners were employed and no expense spared.

Mrs. L.M. Crookenden, widow of the late Col. Crookenden of Barham, and only surviving child of William Gay recalled her childhood at Higham as being "happy, but very much according to Victorian etiquette which still lingered on". Her father owned a much prized herd of pedigree Highland cattle which roamed the estate, and she recalled one occasion when the Bailiff, a Mr. Hopkins, was taking a white bull to be slaughtered at the local butchers. However, the bull had other ideas, and tossed the Bailiff over the church wall before making off down the village High Street, causing great fluster among the villagers.

Mrs. Crookenden's mother, Mrs. Gay, was of French ancestry and this showed through her influence on the decor and furnishings of the house. She enjoyed entertaining and had a wide circle of influential friends, one of these being Countess Zborowski who lived opposite in Bridge Hill House. As a girl Mrs. Crookenden remembered being taken to tea with the charming Countess and instantly disliking a young pale-looking boy called Louis. Also always in the background was the forbidding figure of Miss Hodges the Countess' companion.

It was the friendship between the Countess and Mrs. Gay that was to lead to Higham being sold once again. The Countess had set her heart on buying the property from the Gay family, and any objections raised were soon overcome by the countess' charm.

Mrs. Crookenden had in her possession a dolls house originally made for the Hallett family as an exact replica of Higham, which must have been over 150 years old.



## 7. COUNTESS ZBOROWSKI AND YOUNG LOUIS VAROW

When Margaret, Countess Zborowski first came to Bridge she set her heart on buying Higham, and used all her charms to persuade the Gay Family to sell her the property. When the purchase was complete she laid down plans for the whole house to be transformed. Unfortunately she did not live to see her dreams come true as she died of influenza just before the work on the house was completed.

Margaret was the wealthy granddaughter of William Astor, and shortly after her marriage to Baron Alphonse de Shiers had ended in divorce, she married Count Elliott Zborowski. He was of Polish/American ancestry and had inherited much capital from his father who had been one of the early settlers in the Eastern United States with extensive property in New York and New Jersey.

To say that Count Elliott Zborowski was somewhat of a character would be an understatement. Tradition demanded that no self-respecting Zborowski ever died with his bedsocks on. Elliott lived up to this tradition with full verve and vigour. His penchant for abandoned horse riding, polo playing and general zest for living gave credence to the tales that after an evening's drinking he rode his stallion up the main staircase at Coventry House, Melton Mowbray. Needless to say, good manners and breeding prevented him from taking the horse further than the bedroom door...

Into this warm, fun-loving high society, Louis Vorow Zborowski was born on the 20th of February 1895. The boy grew up with many friends, two of whom were Lord Limerick's children, Viscount Glentworth and Lady Victoria. The children spent many happy hours together at Dramar Castle in Ireland.

Louis listened with interest to his father's account of his apparent casual participation in the great Paris-to-Vienna motor race in June 1902, and which he claimed he would have won but for a French adjudicator's decision against him. Cars now completely filled the Count's life. The stables at Melton Mowbray were closed and the horses sold. From now on the Count's attention was completely captivated by the large noisy monsters which had been described by the Victorians as being an "outrage to all decent living beings".



The carefree world to which young Louis had become accustomed was shattered when he was eight years old when his Mother returned from Nice with the news that his father had been killed in an automobile accident on the Grande Corniche Road. It was believed that his gold cuff-links had caught in the throttle on the steering column, throwing the Count into the roadside where he sustained a fractured skull. Louis deeply felt the loss of his father and when he returned from the funeral at Burton Lazars he could not bear to think about the prospect of growing up under the care of the women in his family- his mother and her companion Miss Beatrice Hodges.

After his father died, the house at Melton Mowbray was sold, and the Countess, Louis and Miss Hodges moved to London. There the Countess' health suffered with the London air, and they moved to Bridge. The adjacent estate of Higham immediately attracted the attention of Margaret Laura Zborowski, and she was determined to persuade the Gay family to sell her the property. The Countess achieved her ambition by buying the house, but sadly before the finished touches to her 'dream house' were completed, she died of influenza.

Once again, Louis made the journey to Burton Lazars cemetery where the Countess was buried beside her husband. The young Count Louis was just sixteen years old when he moved to Higham with Miss Hodges and the rest of the household

#### 8. COUNT LOUIS VANOW ZBOROWSKI

At the age of sixteen Count Louis Zborowski moved into his Higham estate. He was extremely wealthy, his father having left him £8,000,000, and his mother £3,000,000. He attended King's School, Canterbury where it is not actually recorded that he was expelled, though they were not sorry he left. Louis had a flair for languages, an inborn mechanical ability and an appreciable artistic talent, the latter suppressed by his tutors as being considered effeminate. Tutors came and went. He spent a term at Eton College, and tried university life. He had a natural intellect, but his eccentric personality eventually became the downfall of all attempts at classical forms of education.

The young Count turned to cars for solace. The cars on the estate discouraged spirited driving due to the heavy bodywork, and so with the aid of some friends he transformed one of the three by fitting a lightweight sporting coachwork on to it. A local firm of Bligh Bros. was co-opted into helping, and professional advice was sought at the Weybridge Coachworks of Gordon Watney.

At this stage the Count's interest in machinery was not limited to cars alone. He developed a keen passion for aeroplanes- as engines, and had a hanger at nearby Bekesbourne aerodrome. Flying itself had little appeal and it is recorded that he remarked to his friend C.G. Le Champion "I find flying utterly boring", and so aeroplanes were left to be rigged and flown by his employees. Also, a boat was moored at Faversham creek fitted with a Mercedes engine, but again his interest dwindled quickly. Motor cycles were purchased from Canterbury shops and ridden with gusto through the estate and surrounding countryside, raising many a scornful eyebrow from villagers.

One of his companions at this time was T.H. Lawrence, later to become better known as 'Lawrence of Arabia'. Another was a friend from Kings School days, the ex-Sandhurst cadet Clive Gallup who became a permanent part of the Higham scene for a number of years.

As the Count's personality developed, so did his love of practical jokes with bizarre ideas. It was not unknown for him to booby-trap the rose garden with small explosive devices in order to surprise unexpected visitors admiring the gardener's handiwork. This was much to the horror of Ted Mansell, the head gardener. It was also commonplace for him to use the garden statue for target practice, or the front courtyard as a firing range.

The now famous Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Light Railway had its beginnings at Higham. The original narrow gauge track was salvaged from Jackson's scrapyards in Golden Square, Canterbury, and laid at Higham. A beautifully built locomotive designed by Sir Nigel Gresley and named 'The Green Goddess' hauled house guests and shooting parties around the estate. When the estate was sold after the Count's death, the railway was bought by Capt. Howe and Lee Guinness and laid in its present position. 'The Green Goddess' is still a major item of the present-day rolling stock.



Louis was also an early exponent of 'mad' movies, trains featuring in many of them. He would tie one of his many lady friends to the railway line, and with the assistance of his friend the chief engineer, Len Martin, would arrange a dramatic rescue in true gallant manner just as the train was approaching, the whole episode being filmed and later shown at one of his many parties. Len Martin recalled one incident when a specially constructed building was set on fire with the intention of Louis going through the inferno complete en femme. However, on this occasion the stunt almost failed, and they escaped with only a very narrow margin of safety.

Unfortunately, all the films were destroyed after the Count's death in 1924, apparently his widow did not wish to be reminded of these escapades.

At the start of the 1914-18 war, Louis volunteered his services, but much to his disappointment was refused admission to the armed forces. The reason was not revealed, but may have had something to do with his Polish ancestry, Zborowski not sounding right for an Army officer. However, in order not to be completely excluded he worked on the 'home front' by turning over the coach works, of which he was a director, to the manufacture of artillery wheels. Many acres of pasture land also came under the plough in an effort to produce more food crops. Another of the Count's war efforts was to fit a searchlight to one of his high powered cars, ostensibly to watch the Dover road for enemy infiltrators, but enjoying every minute of the late night driving.

In keeping with his playboy image and the family tradition, a high-society life developed at Higham. Many pretty girls from the theatre attended Higham's champagne parties, one of whom was Phyllis Monkman, star of 'The Bing Boys'. Louis eventually married an American showgirl, Violet Ethel Leicester, and she became Countess Zborowski in 1919, honeymooning on the Thames at Wallingford. for their first Christmas at Higham as Count and Countess, Mrs. Dixon was asked to draw up a list of the families of all the servants and estate workers. A grand Christmas Ball was then arranged for them, with bands coming down from London, and the very best food and wine served. It was a great success, and became an annual event until 1923.



These events were recalled by elderly local villagers, who also revealed another facet of the Count's character. Apparently at the last of those Grand Balls he raised his champagne glass to toast the estate workers. As it 'clinked' against the other glasses it shattered, which the Count took to be an ill omen, and he immediately retreated to his bedroom and spoke to no one for a week. The following year he was tragically killed.

The Count's generosity was recalled in an article written by David A. Paine which appeared in the 'Veteran and Vintage' magazine in the December 1969 issue. It seems that in 1920 the Count in hearing the laments of the local fire officer about his aged horse-drawn appliance being too slow to reach the outlying villages fires in time to be of any use, offered the Brigade a Pilian racing chassis complete with engine and Dion rear suspension. His coach builder were commissioned to build a suitable body to comfortably accommodate ten men and a mile of hose. The superb 75hp engine could develop speeds of 60mph and if necessary also haul a steam pump, and at the time was probably one of the fastest engines of its type in the country.

What other village could boast such equipment! In recognition of his generosity the Fire Brigade bestowed on the Count the honorary title of Captain of the Brigade which he proudly retained until death. His generosity was known and appreciated by all, but at one time his debts had accumulated to such an extent that Higham was mortgaged for £10,000.

Although a millionaire, money could not always buy what the Count most wanted. William James Pierce, who lived in London Road, Canterbury was veterinary surgeon to the Zborowski estate, and had taught the Count to shoot as a young lad. After one dog had particularly well retriever for the Count, he asked him to name his price for the dog, but was told it wasn't for sale.

It was with shock and dismay that the estate workers heard of the death of the Count. He had died tragically from a fractured skull while racing at Monza. His body was brought back to Dover, then to Higham, and finally to its resting place alongside his parents at Burton Lazars, to the tune of his favourite hymn 'Lead Kindly Light'. He died on October 19th 1924 at the age of 29.

It was the end of an era the like of which Higham was not to see again.

## 9. THE CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG

Probably the most famous car of all time was first envisaged and built at Higham. Louis Zborowski's love of large, fast engines led him to design and build the now legendary Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang, immortalised by Ian Fleming's book of the same name, but having little resemblance to the original car, it was written in the nearby village of Bekesbourne.

At the end of the first world war the Aircraft Disposal Company advertised 30,000 surplus aeroengines for sale at Wadden (later Croydon) Airport. One of these was a six-cylinder 23,093cc Mayback engine capable of developing just over 300hp.

This enormous engine was coaxed into a specially lengthened Mercedes chassis. In order to retain all the Mercedes characteristic so loved by the Count, the radiator and scroll clutch were retained. In the fashion of the times, the car was given a painted prow for good air penetration, in spite of the enormous drag of the big radiator and primitive bodywork. Chitty was in the nature of an experiment and was given a crude four-seater body which was knocked up by Bligh Bros of Canterbury, a firm with whom the Count had financial interests and under whose trade plates Chitty was first driven.

In 1921 the Easter event at Brooklands racetrack saw Chitty make her debut causing an immediate sensation. Zborowski and his retinue of engineering friends clad in loud-checked palm beach caps, started his monstrous car with the aid of a half-axle from an aeroplane compression device and someone furiously winding the starting magnet was a sight no Brooklands habitue cared to miss.

Zborowski was cautious; he knew that much would be expected of his 23 litre home-built car, and that if it failed as a racing car he could become a laughing stock. He didn't expect the handicaps to beat him lightly. As handling had previously proved difficult at speed, 7cwt of sand was placed in the back of the car to weight it down in order to keep the wheels in contact with the ground throughout the race.

Chitty was awarded 78 seconds from its nearest rival, a Frenchman Andre Boillet, in a Sunbeam. On the second lap Chitty increased her lead, lapping at 108.15mph. This was Chitty's first victory. The bookies took 6 to 4 on Zborowski, 4 to 1 on the field. Chitty won two further events that day, and came second behind the Count's 4½ litre Mercedes driven by a friend. No Easter egg would have matched the sweet success that Monday.

Flushed with a feeling of success, the Count returned to Higham he felt the car had behaved well and deserved further development and refinement. The Zenith carburettors were replaced with three Claude-Hobson's, each with its own two-branch manifold outside pipe. Moreover, the 'bunny' body was removed and guards were wired above the exterior driving chains. All this was completed for the Whitsun race meeting at Brooklands.

With a ten second start in the lightning start handicap, Chitty was easily lapping at 111.29mph. A rehandicap for the next race proved too much for this magnificent machine in spite of a lap speed of 113mph down the straight. A cowl had been fitted over the radiator, but it fell off, the tank also split as the flexible chassis rode the Brookland's bumps necessitating Chitty's withdrawal from any further events that day.

The combination of Zborowski's temperament and Chitty's construction was bound to lead to eventual success, but this was not to be in the 1921 Brookland's Summer Meeting. Harford shock absorbers were fitted to Chitty to keep the back wheels down, but this only gave the car a curious lolling appearance as she went around the track. In the Lightning Start Handicap Chitty achieved second place to Swain's G.P Vauxhall, but was handicapped completely out of the Lightning Long Race. Although winning appealed to Zborowski's flamboyant nature, he judged Chitty not so much by her track performance, but by the fact that he greatly enjoyed driving this magnificent car on the then near deserted roads of Kent.

By the late summer of 1921 an improved version of Chitty II was nearing completion in the Higham workshops. Chitty II followed the same general lines as the original Chitty, but with a shorter wheelbase using the same type of pre-war (probably 1907) Mercedes chain driven chassis, with an 18.882cc Benz aeroengine fitted. This car had been conceived and built as an exciting car for the road rather than for the racing track.



Having missed appearing at the August Brookland's meeting, although Chitty II had been included in the programme, Zborowski decided to enter both cars in the Autumn meeting. Unfortunately, good fortune eluded them; the smaller car proved undergeared for the track and had too severe a handicap to overcome, having to give Major Seagrave's 3-litre Sunbeam 8 seconds start in the 100mph short handicap and 12 seconds in the 8½ mile version of the race. This was Chitty II's only appearance as a track car; it managed to lap at 108.27mph but was not raced again at Brooklands.

Nevertheless Zborowski had every reason to be pleased with his first excursion into the realm of fantastic motor cars. The giants were here to stay.

During 1922 Zborowski drove Chitty II across France to Algeria, followed by a white Mercedes to carry the luggage. After a stay at the Negresco Hotel in Nice, Zborowski and his party drove some 250 miles south of Biscra on the fringe of the Sahara desert where a close call to disaster was only just averted. Chitty's radiator boiled dry just as the party's water supply was at its lowest level.

Before returning to England, Zborowski and his companion, Major Clive Gallup, drove up to Strasbourg in order to view the circuit where the French Grand Prix would be run later that year, both having entered cars for the event.

The Count had previously imported from Germany a 28/as Mercedes chassis equipped with a Sketchy test body, a six cylinder overhead camshaft engine, a direct third gear in its four gearbox speed, and a somewhat rudimentary four-wheeled braking system. This was to be the basis of Chitty III, but always known as the 'White Mercedes'. The original 7-litre engine was removed (it eventually found its way into a boat), the chassis was lengthened and a six-cylinder 14.778cc Mercedes aeroengine fitted. At this time, engines of this type could easily be obtained for as little as £30.

Westinghouse was approached for a new braking system, and with a complete new body Chitty III became a comparatively modern shaft driven, if still somewhat large for the year 1923.

During 1922 a scarcity of tyres made it essential to limit track events for Chitty types of cars. However, Chitty I entered and won the Southsea Speed Track at an average speed of 73.10mph in September. Zborowski had intended to resume racing at the Brookland's track, but unfortunately disaster struck during a fast practice lap when an offside front tyre burst. While climbing the members banking, hurtling round as she did so, she went backwards through the wooden running hut at the beginning of the mile, tore off her front axle and came

to rest upright a considerable distance away.

The riding mechanic Ben Martin was thrown out and badly shaken, but Zborowski stayed in his seat and escaped serious injury. One official, Chamberlain, had three fingers amputated as Chitty smashed through the running box (the poor unfortunate fellow was later killed in a similar accident involving motorcycles). another official, Cann, saw the car go out of control and slipped into a ditch, Chitty passing over his head without doing him any harm. This was Chitty I's last appearance at Brooklands's.

By 1924 Zborowski had become a team driver for Mercedes, and all his visits to Unterturkheim were made in Chitty III. Chitty III was entered in the Brooklands Whitsun meeting of 1924 in the private competitions Handicap, indicative of the fact that Zborowski still remained. He lapped at 93.02mph, but was unplaced. However, this proved to be merely a 'warming up' for the short handicap Gold Vase event when Chitty lapped the track at 104.63mph, and won by a  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mile.

At the Summer Brooklands meeting Chitty III was brought out again for the short handicap and lightning long handicap, only to be pipped to the post in the events by Parry Thomas in a Lyland-Thomas Special breaking all Brooklands records. Sadly, this was to be Zborowski's last appearance at Brooklands.

Back at Higham two other cars were under construction. One was not completed, but the other was notorious and known as the 'Higham Special'. A primitive chassis frame carried a war-time Liberty V12 aeroengine and was the biggest power unit to ever race at Brooklands. The 27-litre engine was matched with a gearbox from a 2000hp Benz with a chain drive and Stub axles of a 1908 Grand Prix Mercedes, finished with a two-seater body. It had a brief but sensational career.

After Count Zborowski's death it was bought by Parry Thomas for £125 and renamed it 'Babs'. In April 1926 Thomas made a bid for the land speed record on the flats at Pendrie, South Wales. All was going well and he had already beaten Seagrave's previous record by 20mph by notching up 1710.2mph on the previous run, when on a last attempt to improve on this speed the chain snapped, lashing up and killing the driver instantly.

The car was interred in the sand under the Golf Course at Pentre where it remained until 1969 when Prof. O. Hugh Owen exhumed and completely restored it. In 1970 'Babs' was again driven over the flat sands at Pentre though at a somewhat leisurely pace, to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Parry Thomas' record attempt.

Only one Chitty still remains in existence. This is Chitty II. After Zborowski's death it was thought to



have been bought by Mr. A. Fowler for £825, but later became part of the stock of David Scott-Mancroft who had commenced selling horseless carriages to the nobility and gentry in the late 20's. Mr. William Earl Hollis of Dover bought Chitty, and stored it in the corner of his farmyard for over 30 years.

A young lad of 17 while collecting chickens from the farm for his family's butcher shop in Deal took an interest in the old wrecked car. Hollis told him that if he could get the car towed away he could have it. Completely unaware of the car's historical past and its previous owner, he began a task which was to take every spare moment of his life for the next ten years and cost him thousands of pounds. The meticulous restoration of Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang II had begun.

Peter Harris-Mayers was a quiet, sensitive man with a unique dedication to the restoration of beautiful cars. Chitty II was in his possession for 25 years, during which time the car made various appearances in various showrooms as a centrepiece, appeared on TV and helped to raise money for the Children at Guys Hospital. It was only due to the financial burden of the two ton monster that forced Mr. Harris-Mayers to decide to sell her in 1968. The road tax at this time, based on the cubic capacity of the engine, was £140 per year, in addition to the fact that 11mpg was the best fuel consumption ever obtained.

Chitty was put up for sale and bought for £16,500 by an American, Mr. Rinstock of Elendale, New York. However, when the sale was announced in the press a controversy arose over the rightful ownership and Chitty spent the next year in a packing case awaiting shipment to the States.

Mr. Hollis, on whose farm Chitty had been allowed to rot, declared that he had never officially given the car to Peter Harris-Mayers and that it should not have been sold without his permission. According to add to his collection at Beaulieu and offered Mr. Hollis £4000 for the car if he won legal ownership; he also made the plea that the car should not leave Beaulieu. At the end of a three day hearing in a London High Court, Peter Harris-Mayers won the day, and soon after Chitty at last began her journey to the States. She has since changed ownership and is now part of a private collection.

The name 'Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang' still lives on, originally taken, not as we were led to believe, in the film produced by Cubby Broccoli and starring Dick Van Dyke, as the noise made by the exhaust, but from the somewhat lewd music hall song of the period, the words of which, like the singer, have been forgotten. The legendary Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang and her young millionaire creator belong to a distant era, the like



of which we will not see again.

#### 10. FROM HIGHAM TO HIGHLAND COURT

After Count Zborowski's death a sudden hush fell over the estate as once more cattle grazed in the parkland undisturbed by the monstrous cars travelling at high speed up the driveway,

During the four years in which it took the Count's estate administrator George Gosling Plant to finalise the sale of Higham, it was leased to a dairy farmer from Denton, Albert William Goldup, for a rent of £150 per year.

Finally on Tuesday 31st July 1928, Higham was put up for sale at the London Auction Mart, Victoria Street, London SW1, by John D. Wood & Co. It was described in the brochure as "The well known and attractive residence and sporting property of Higham, a fine classic mansion in a finely timbered park".

The house, parkland and hone farmland were bought at the auction by Walter Kennedy Wigham of the Highland Investment Co. Ltd. of Crosby Square, London, for the sum of £17,500.

After moving into Higham with his new bride, a French Countess from the Salignac Fendon family, he changed the name of the house to Highland Court as they did not wish to be dubbed the 'Wighams of Higham' and thought Highland more appropriate.

Walter Wigham and his wife had four sons, Walter Jr., Francis, Goeffrey (who died aged 8) and Bernard. Mr. Bernard Wigham recalls that the cellars were used as playrooms, and a Hornby railway set was laid out so that the children could play without disturbing the rest of the household. Private tutors were employed for the children (the schoolroom is now used as the resident's dining room). At Christmas huge parties were held and all the children from the village visited the house.

Highland Court and its adjoining farm provided many jobs for the local villagers. Many of the estate workers from Zborowski's time had remained, one in particular who returned to act as chauffeur to Walter wigham was Len Martin who had been Zborowski's riding mechanic. Many of the village girls started their working life as housemaids at the house and married estate workers or gardeners.

The Highland Court Investment Co. expanded the farm, and in 1930 new farm buildings and a new dairy block were built. Also built about this time were new stables introduced adjacent to the house. Mr. Bernard Wigham also said that grapes were grown on a fairly large scale for wine making, though all attempts at viticulture in latter years have always been foiled by pheasants

picking the fruit off the vines before being ready to pick.

Mr. Wigham became a well known and respected member of Kentish society. He was High Sheriff of Kent, and his main patronage was the Hospital Management for 8 years, and was host to Princess Marina, Duchess of Kent when she visited Canterbury in 1935 to lay the foundation stone of the new Kent and Canterbury Hospital. In recognition of this work of his a ward in the new hospital was named 'Wigham Ward' in his honour.

In 1936 a cricket ground was added in the grounds at the back of the house. Later, in the mid-50's a mock Tudor cricket pavilion was built and Higham Court Cricket Club held many fixtures there during the season. Many ex-Kent number among the regular members of the team.

Early in 1940 Mrs. Wigham died, but the family had by this time already moved to a smaller house in Bekesbourne where Mr. Wigham continued to live for the duration of the Second World War.

During the war years Highland Court was taken over by the War Department and used as Brigade Headquarters for the London Scottish Regiment. It is believed that when Field Marshal Montgomery visited the troops shortly before D Day he was recorded as having remarked on the luxurious quarters.

Mr. Wigham re-married in 1943, and a further son, David, and a daughter, Cynthia, were born. After the end of the war the family returned to Highland Court for a short period until Mr. Wigham's death in 1948, when the house was offered to the Regional Hospital Board as an annexe to the Kent and Canterbury Hospital.

In the early 1960's when the Highland Court Investment Co. was once again expanding the farm, it necessitated demolishing the old farmhouse estate. A large well was discovered, and it is believed that this may have been the original well once worked by donkeys to provide water for the whole estate.

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## 11. FROM PRIVATE HOUSE TO HOSPITAL ANNEXE

Until his death in 1948, Mr. Walter Wigham had been President of the Kent and Canterbury Hospital Management Committee for 13 years, and Highland Court was offered to the Regional Hospital Board as an addition to the Hospital. The project was then submitted to the Authorities and there followed protracted negotiations through the district Valuer, but the Hospital Management Committee were determined that as far as possible they would acquire Highland Court. They had the support of the Chairman of the Regional Board, and as a result the building was taken over by them.



The plans for its adaptation were drawn up by Mr. Cecil Burns, and Mr. Plant who been responsible for the plans of the main hospital in Canterbury.

The final costs of the acquisition and adaptation was estimated to be approximately £47,000, or £1,000 per bed, including all the equipment. It was not possible to adapt the whole house in one go, and it was therefore planned to carry out the work in two stages, each providing 20-25 beds at a time for gynaecological and ophthalmic patients.

On Thursday 18th October 1951 Highland Court was opened by Mr. K.I. Durham CBE, Chairman of the South Eastern Metropolitan Regional Board, and Mr. E.J. Mount, Chairman of the Hospital Management Committee presided at the ceremony which included a blessing and dedication to its new use by the Hospital Committee's Chairman now Rev. R.A.F. Pratt. Hospital nurses formed a guard of honour to welcome the Mayor and Mayoress of Canterbury, Councillor and Mrs. S.H. Jennings, The Sheriff and Mrs. J.H. Barrett, and Mr. Walter Wigham Jr. son of the late owner, together with many VIPs from the medical profession.

In his welcoming speech Mr. Mount spoke of the later former owner of Highland Court and of his valuable service to the hospital. He said that there was probably no use to which Highland Court could have been put that would have pleased Mr. Wigham more than its becoming a part of the Kent and Canterbury Hospital. The opening of this annexe with its well equipped and up to date operating theatre would go far in helping to relieve the congestion at the main Hospital.

After the opening ceremony, bouquets were presented to the ladies and all guests were taken on a tour of the hospital and spoke to the first four patients. All the visitors were very impressed with the Oak ward which had previously been the Ballroom and had echoed to the strains of waltzes and the clinking of champagne glasses. From this room one can appreciate the sunken garden with its panoramic view of Canterbury beyond, framed by towering oak and beech trees which make up the 30 acres of gardens surrounding the hospital.

To complete the afternoons proceedings teas were served under the excellent supervision of Mr. Peter Mason of the County Hotel Catering Service of Canterbury.

During the time that Highland Court served as an annexe to the main hospital at Canterbury it was under the control of the matron, Miss Sheehan, and staffed by nurses and trainees to the main hospital at Canterbury.

The General Nursing council had given its approval for student nurses to attend training of three months at Highland Court as it was considered to come under the same structure as the Kent and Canterbury Hospital. Sister Souter was in charge of Admissions, Sister Farmer was Ward sister and Clothier was Night sister.



Many patients awakening from anaesthetic after operations opened their eyes to see beautiful stick and daub decorated ceilings or to hear birdsong drifting in through open windows. Post operative recuperation must have been aided by the strolls in the sunshine or by sitting by the large enclosed lily pond. The arm friendly atmosphere is still fondly remembered by patients who spent their time at in hospital at Highland Court.

The efficient and happy hospital continued its service until 1968, when due to financial constraints and an attempt to centralise its units at the main hospital in Canterbury, it was decided to move the gynaecological unit back to the Kent and Canterbury Hospital.

When the doors closed after the last patient had left the hospital stood empty for four years until it was re|opened in November 1972.

## 12. A HOME FOR THE MENTALLY HANDICAPPED

In 1969 the parents of a 12 year old mentally handicapped Canterbury girl complained bitterly to the Kentish Gazette about the conditions at Leybourne Grange Hospital, Maidstone. after the publicity given to the case by the newspaper the hospital was visited by the then Minister of Health and Social Security, Baroness Souta. In time this was followed by a Government enquiry into hospitals for the mentally handicapped

The main objective for this enquiry was to reduce overcrowding, and to get smaller 'family' units wherever possible. It was to this end that Highland Court was considered. Bridge Blean Rural District Council gave its informal approval to the scheme providing the Hospital Management Committee, voluntary organisations and any other interested bodies agreed.

It was planned to open Highland Court Hospital as a residence for approximately 50 moderately to light mentally handicapped patients who would not have to rely too heavily on nursing care, and enjoy a fair measure of independence.

Some resentment from local villages was experienced when the idea was first broached, but after reassurance the idea was accepted. Any worries the villages might have had was soon proved completely unfounded as the patients from Highland Court were accepted as part of the local scene.

They took part in Silver Jubilee Celebrations, and won such events as the Easter Bonnet Parades. The village primary school issued invitations to the patients whenever they had concerts and always gave them a warm welcome.

The Hospital also depended on the help of voluntary workers from the villages, as well as on the support of the local branch of the League of Friends of Kent and Canterbury Hospital.

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The Hospital also depended on the help of voluntary workers from the villages, as well as on the support of the local branch of the League of Friends of Kent and Canterbury Hospital.

After months of meetings and decisions approval was finally given and the task of re-decorating and refurbishing the hospital began. It was not until just before Christmas that Highland Court Hospital again opened its doors to yet another 'family'.

The first six patients, all boys, came during the week commencing 18 December 1972. All come from Leybourne Grange Hospital except one who came from Princess Christian's Hospital, Tonbridge.

Since its re-opening, many more patients joined those first few - a further twenty the following year, and another five in 1974. Two more came in 1975, and an additional one each in each subsequent year. A few left Highland Court to go on to hostel accommodation, but any vacancies were quickly filled, and there was always a waiting list of patients who needed accommodation on a full-time basis.

Each month an average of five patients went to the hospital for short-term care; they normally lived at home and came into residential care to enable their parents to have a rest or take a holiday. Patients were also accepted on this basis if an assessment was required by a consultant.

One day-patient attended for two days a week so that she could be helped with her education and training and generally socialise with other patients.

Patients led a wide and varied social life which included discos, visits to pubs, social events with other hospitals and clubs, holidays in North Wales and trips to the Continent.

In Highland Court's own Occupational Therapy Department arts and crafts, cookery, housecraft and gardening were taught. Some went to work in other hospitals working in greenhouses, carpentry workshops, while others attended the Adult Training Centre at Cow Lane in Canterbury.

It could be said that in former years Highland Court had seen days of carefree extravagance and elegance; pop records may have taken the place of dance orchestras from London, but never had a 'family' lived so happily at the house, or so much pleasure been derived as by those mentally handicapped residents living to their full potential.

Highland Court finally closed as a hospital in 19 .

### 13. THE FUTURE

For some years Highland Court presented a sad sight to those who trod its driveway to the foot of its steps. It had been separated from Bridge by the by-pass which runs in a deep cutting within a quarter of a mile from its

frontage, rising to the South to the original level of the old Dover Road which it re-joins.

During this time proposals had been mooted that owing to its proximity to the by-pass with its convenient turn-off for Bridge that it would make a good hotel and country club, but nothing was to come of it.

It was sold during the Spring of 1995 through the Canterbury office of the estate agents Cluttons, who declined to give any details about the purchase.