

## A walk around Patrixbourne 2020

Thank you all for coming and for supporting the Friends of Bekesbourne church by buying your ticket at the Auction of Promises in October 2019.

As you are all local people I am sure you know a lot about Patrixbourne and, indeed some of you live in the parish of Patrixbourne, so I hope that what I am going to share with you today adds to your existing knowledge and perhaps you can tell me things that I don't know.

When Stephen and I and our two sons moved to Bekesbourne from London in 1998 I took on the role of parish clerk for the conjoined parishes of Bekesbourne and Patrixbourne and later I became the Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator for both parishes and correspondent for the Kentish Gazette. Nevertheless, I have always felt shy of pretending to be a custodian of the history of Patrixbourne. I always thought that my friends and fellow local historians, Ken Stacey and Laurence Boyle, were much better versed in Patrixbourne history and what's more they lived in the village. Also Mary Berg is the latest in a line of local historians who have written accounts of St Mary's church.

However, times move on and both Ken and Laurence have sadly died and I was given Laurence's archives so I think it is time to share their combined knowledge and also to expand on what I have learned about the social history of the village and some of the drawings and photographs I have collected from them and from others.



### Before the War

**The history of Patrixbourne is closely linked with that of the house known as Bifrons which was in the parkland between Patrixbourne and Bridge.** There is no documentary evidence for the precise date when this house was built but the architectural evidence leads to the conclusion that the year was c1615 when James 1 (1603-1625) was on the throne. It may have been designed by the architect, Inigo Jones (1573–1652), in a Palladian style now known as Jacobean Courtier style. It is sometimes referred to as the Bargrave house after its owner, John

Bargrave (sometimes Bargar) of Bridge. The mansion had an E-plan and extensive south-facing gardens which are depicted in an oil painting of c1695 to 1705.

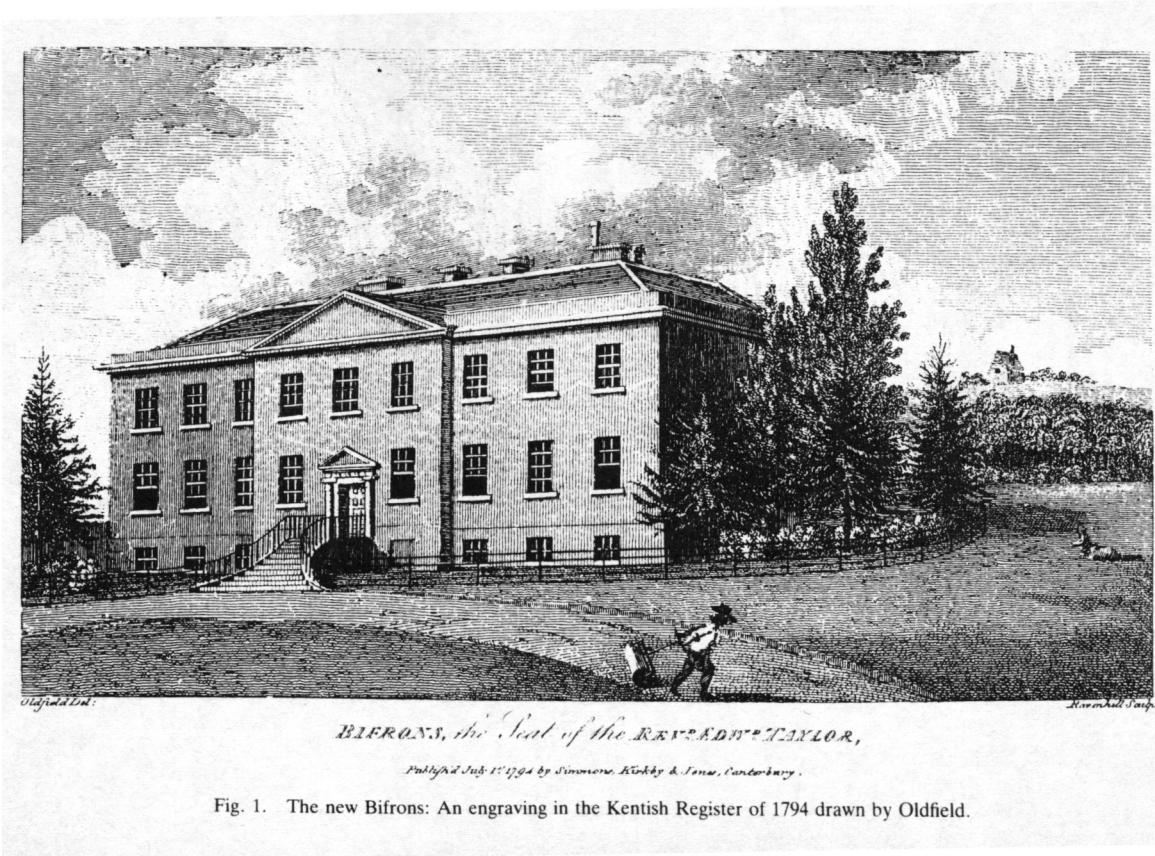


Fig. 1. The new Bifrons: An engraving in the Kentish Register of 1794 drawn by Oldfield.

**The Georgian Reverend Taylor house built  
circa 1787**



**The Taylor House of c17 as renovated by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Marquis Conyngham c1878**

The Bargrave house was demolished and re-built by a new owner, Rev Edward Taylor, on much the same footprint, in around 1787 (time of George III 1760 to 1820). Sadly, despite extensive renovations by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Marquis Conyngham at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this house was in a bad state of repair after WW2 and was therefore demolished. Only the stable block and the gardener's cottage now survive at the centre of the estate. We will walk up there soon and take a look at it and Bifrons will be central to our discussion about the village which it has shaped and formed in many ways.

By the way when I first came to Bokesbourne I pronounced the name of the estate as Biff-rons much to the amusement of some of the local people. I know now that it is Bi-frons which is usually taken to mean a house with two fronts. It probably relates to the E-shaped plan of the mansion with the two outer wings protruding forward.

**Patrixbourne is what is known as an estate village.** It is a mixture of ancient cottages dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century and newer buildings in the 'picturesque style' built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to look older. Also many of the earlier cottages were extensively altered in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to be in the 'picturesque' style which was very popular at the time. Variety was most important and irregular walls, projecting eaves, gabled ends, elaborate barge boards and porches were included in the designs which were issued in pattern books from circa 1780. Another name for the style was the 'cottage orné' or 'decorated cottage'.

Many of the changes are attributable to the Marchioness Elizabeth Conyngham (MC) who was a favourite of King George IV (1820-1830). The family acquired Bifrons in 1830. MC was widowed in 1832 and continued to live at Bifrons for the next thirty years (she died 1861 aged 91 years). She is described as a notable benefactress: 'fat, handsome, kindly, shrewd and extremely fond of jewels.' It is said that George IV lavished her with gifts.



Members of the Conyngham family continued to reside at Bifrons until circa 1882 and the family still owns much of the estate which is rented out. I believe that the current Marquis makes a visit each year around October time.

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**We are starting this walk in the Recreation Ground** because it is a convenient meeting place and provides off-road parking as well as other conveniences.

The Recreation Ground was originally part of the Conyngham Bifrons estate and was leased to Bekesbourne Sports Club from circa 1922 as a ground on which to play football.

In 1957 the ground was conveyed to the parish council and has remained in its ownership ever since. It has continued as a recreation ground and football has been played here continuously since 1922. These days it is instituted as a charity and managed by a committee of local residents.

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**Moving on we skirt the back of Mulberry Cottage** - one of the ancient buildings of the village. It has been extensively renovated in recent years and the gardens have been re-laid. It is now known as Mulberry House. Note the wooden building close to the boundary which is the estate office where estate dwellers went to pay their dues to the bailiff – the most recent of whom in the 1960s was a popular chap called Charlie Apps. This ‘hut’ was moved from a more central position in the garden during the 21<sup>st</sup> century renovations.

Mulberry Cottage was for many years the home of Mr and Mrs Wilfrid Mowll who moved to Patricbourne in 1948 and later purchased some of the village properties from the Conyngham family when many of the estate cottages were put up for sale at an auction in 1950. Twenty-eight cottages were put up for sale and the estate raised just over £3000. Mr Mowll was the East Kent Coroner for many years. Both he and Mrs Mowll are buried in Bekesbourne churchyard.

There is a video available on line of the interior of Mulberry cottage before it was recently renovated <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4MX7-DaNxAA>

**When we leave the Recreation ground we will walk west along the footpath to The Street.** To our left (south) will be part of the Mulberry House gardens and to our right will be the garden of Lion Cottage. Until WW2 there were three cottages on this site. David Millyard discusses them in his book about Bekesbourne and the Second World War. He tells how the retired teacher from Bekesbourne School, Miss Prett, hid under the kitchen table to escape the bombing which destroyed the cottages on August 12<sup>th</sup> 1940. An aerial photograph of the village shows the three cottages and also the Oasts northwards up The Street which were also destroyed in the infamous bombing raid. Planning permission has now been granted to build a new detached house on this site.

Bifrons had its own hop garden to supply hops to the Oasts at least until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I am guessing when I say that it was possibly at the top of Hode Lane – it might have been adjacent to the Vicarage or on the field behind the demolished Oasts adjacent to the Bekesbourne Hop Fields. There is a photograph of the local ladies working there – in particular Mrs Dungey and her daughter, Dorothy who lived at Court House at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.





### **Bifrons Hop Garden**

We will turn right at the end of the footpath onto The Street to walk up to the mini-roundabout. Please take care and walk in single file facing the traffic. Note the 'picturesque' architecture of the buildings as you go including the full-length carved Lions and the carved head and shoulders of Elephants embellishing the first pair of cottages. Also the large shop window and the bow window of Godden House. This was the site of the parish post office from 1891 until it moved to Bekesbourne station in 1881. The house later became a shop and tea-room known as 'The Bow Window'. Wendy Durell remembers visiting it and there is a photo of her sitting on the bench outside with daughter, Mandy, in a pushchair. It was run latterly by Connie who was the girlfriend of the afore-mentioned Charlie Apps. In 1840 William Godden is listed in Kelly's Directory as a grocer and dealer in sundries.



PXE.13

THE VILLAGE, PATRICXBOURNE

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### The Bow Window – tea room and ice cream shop

**Godden House and the adjoining cottages at the north-east end of The Street were built in 1699.** These originally comprised seven cottages. Godden House is a timber-framed building restored in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the ground floor was faced with red brick and the upper storey was hung with tiles and over sailing on a bressumer (beam). I have seen it written that these are mathematical tiles but I do not know the truth of that.

[The notes that follow in italics are taken from the record for the Listed Buildings.]

*The cottage portion has sprocket eaves and the shop portion a small gable with scalloped bargeboards. Tiled roof. L-range to rear with C17 chimneystack. The next cottage, No 1 in the south-west front is dated 1699 with the initials E S W. Two storeys red brick. Its north-west half has a tiled roof and 2 hipped dormers and its south-east half a stringcourse and a slate roof. Gabled weatherporch with wooden-twisted columns. The other cottages form the return front facing south-east. Two storeys red brick. Slate roof. Seven casement windows facing south, 4 casement windows facing south-east.*

*C15 timber-framed building with mid-late C19 alterations. Two storeys. Half H-shaped. Four windows. The centre portion of 2 windows is stuccoed with a stringcourse. The projecting wings are gabled; the ground floor of the north-west one is stuccoed and of the south-east one flints with rusticated quoins. The first floor oversails on the protruding ends of the floor joists, the north-west one being close-studded, the south-east one plastered. The gables above oversail also on bressumers and brackets, the north-west one has an attic window. Modern bays on ground floor, Tiled roof with tall brick stacks. Doorway in attached wall of knapped flints with brick coping has armorial plaque of Marquess Conyngham.*



**We are now in Bifrons Park** which is distinguished by its numerous magnificent Wellingtonia trees – *Sequoia dendron giganteum*. They were first propagated in England from seed sent from California in 1858 and wealthy Victorians used the new soon-to-be giant trees to adorn many great British estates. In addition to those in the park there was once one in the middle of the road near to where we now have the mini-roundabout. It was surrounded by iron railings. I am told that Mr Shorey of Aerodrome Road famously crashed into it circa 1970 and it was featured in the Kentish Gazette but I have never been able to find the press cutting.



**There was once a Wellingtonia on the junction**

The Gate Lodge cottage here is one of a pair; the other is at the top end of the drive adjacent to the A2. This lodge is a classic example of the picturesque style and features: scalloped barge boards; gabled porches; carved columns in the barley-sugar style and ornamental chimney stacks. I particularly like the octagonal shape of the front portion.





*A cottage orné. Mid C19. One storey and attic. Faced with rough plaster, tiled roof. Casement windows. At the south-east end is an octagonal portion with a conical roof an ornamental red brick chimney stack at its apex. Doorway in its north-east side with a large gabled hood over. On its south-east side is a porch with barleysugar columns supporting a gable with scalloped bargeboards .Pointed doorway. On the south-west side is a small bay window with a gable over. The centre portion of the lodge is recessed and contains one window and a small gable. The first floor oversails on the south side. At the north-west end is a projection which forms a T with the recesses centre. This has larger gable ends north and south with scalloped bargeboards and a bay window below each on ground floor. The north-west front of this portion has a central pointed doorway. Two windows with drip moulds over and 2 gables dormers. Each window bay is flanked by pilasters.*

Lower Lodge was at one time used for a school for girls supported by the Marchioness Conyngham (MC). The school girls wore a uniform of blue serge dresses and red cloaks. They were educated so that they would be able to undertake domestic service tasks in the big houses. At one time there were 52 pupils. [The head teacher was Miss Ruth Wynell, (or Wysall) she had been succeeded by Miss Caroline Sheppard by 1855, then by Emma Collison in 1861 and by Mrs Julia Wills in 1867.] MC also gifted the land for the old schoolhouse in Patrixbourne Road, Bridge which opened in 1872.

This lodge was the home of the first civilian casualty of WW2. Mr James Austen was killed in the bombing raid which destroyed the Patrixbourne cottages and Oasts on August 12th 1940. James was working on Chalkpit Hill at the time. He has the distinction of being commemorated on memorials in both Bekesbourne and Patrixbourne churches.

It was also home in 1915 to the family of Company Sergeant-Major David Alexander of The Buffs (East Kent Regiment) and is the address to which the Army sent his commemorative plaque when he died in France in the Advance to Victory in 1918. He is commemorated on the Patrixbourne war memorial.



The lodges built at the entrances to the Georgian parks were to make a statement about the status and wealth of the estate and its owners. Perhaps the extra tree in the lane was to emphasise the grandeur of it all or perhaps there was just one left over? Given the dates it was probably the second Marquis, Francis Nathaniel, son of MC, who planted the Wellingtonia trees.

**Whilst we are here we will talk briefly about Sondes House and Wanstalls** (now Patrixbourne House) both named originally after one-time owners.

**Sondes House** Behind the very tall yew hedge is an L-shaped house. The south-east wing is 17<sup>th</sup> century and has a particularly fine Dutch gable. Lord Sondes who lived here in the 1860s was instrumental in ensuring that Bekesbourne had a station when the railway line was built. Sondes Barn behind is a separate dwelling developed/renovated by John Knight & Co. John Knight was responsible for many of the conversions of buildings in Patrixbourne and also for the new building at the station when the station master's house was demolished in the 1960s.



**Sondes House with its fine Dutch gable**

*Red brick. Two storeys and attics in gable end. Tiled roof with shaped Dutch gable end facing south-east. C17 brick chimneystack. Modillion eaves cornice. Stringcourse. Four window with some casement windows and some sash windows with glazing bars intact. Two later bays on both floors. Doorcase between these with flat hood over on brackets. The south-west wing is covered with modern tile-hanging but is possibly timber-framed beneath this. At the south-west end of its south-east front is an oversailing gable. Three casement windows.*

**Patrixbourne House** This house on the roundabout does not appear to be listed but it is an ancient house which was previously called Wanstalls after the owner at the time. Wanstall was a prominent person in Bekesbourne in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. There was a fire in the 1970s which destroyed some of the building and it was subsequently rebuilt in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century incorporating the remaining parts and renamed Patrixbourne House. There is a barn which has

been converted into a separate dwelling and an outhouse which is also a separate dwelling/annexe. The old farm pond shown on the Tithe map of 1840 still exists but it has been reduced in size in recent years.



**Wanstalls before the fire in the 1970s**

**Moving on up the drive through the park** we pass the Gardener’s Cottage on the left and arrive at the Stable block now developed as a number of tenanted dwellings and known as Bifrons Gardens. The main house was situated to the west of this building.

The magnificent Lime Avenue (*Tilia X europaea*) is on our right. It leads south from the upper road (Bifrons Hill) to the north frontage of the Georgian Taylor house. I have read that it was once the finest Lime Avenue in England. One of the trees was recorded in 2003 as having a girth of 9.70m and a height of 19m. [There is another fine lime avenue in Bokesbourne at Howletts where John Aspinall is buried.







### The Lime Avenue

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**Going round the corner and taking care not to disturb the Stable Block residents or the farming operations** we can just about determine the outline of the buried remains of the mansion. During September and October 1988 and again between February and May 1989 these were excavated. The two houses (Jacobean and Georgian) appear to have been built on the same outline and, as is usual in these situations, many of the materials from the first house were used in the second one.

Only the floors and wall partitions of the basement of the houses survived the post-war demolition of 1948. Nevertheless there was much to discover in the excavations of the 1980s because the lower floors of both buildings were partly below ground. These comprised a range of rooms leading off a central east-west corridor. The domestic functions of these rooms included both outdoor larders (for game, fish and welsh mutton) and indoor larders, scullery, kitchen, linen room, butler's pantry, footman's brushing room designed to be easily washed out, as well as a footman and hall boy's bedroom. The servants' hall and the housemaids' sitting room, the boiler room, and the water tank room (used for softening water). (See more in the Appendix.)

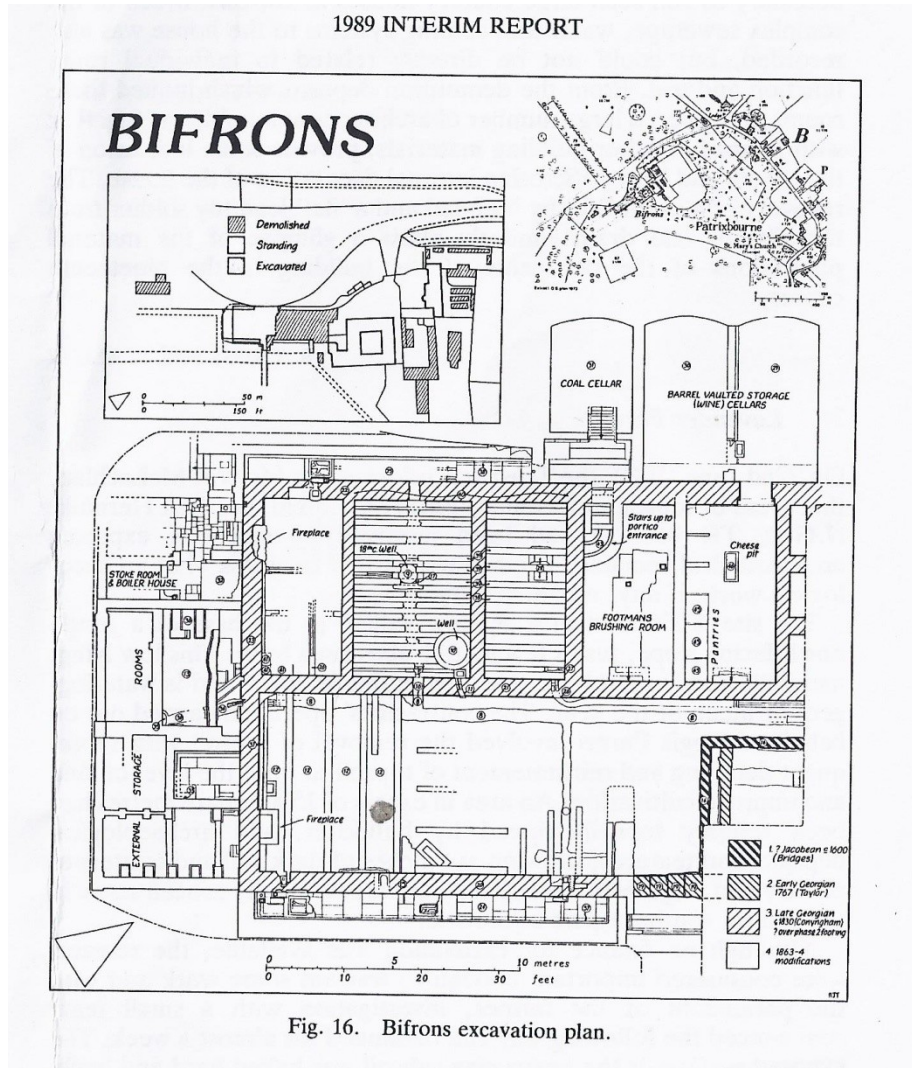
There were at least two wells within the boundaries of the house and both appear to have been linked to drainage channels when no longer needed for the supply of water.

The house was built in a damp spot at the bottom of the valley and drainage appears always to have been an issue. The third Marquis was very concerned about it at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

He remodelled the house in 1878 and lifted the ground levels by laying several metres depth of sand but damp continued to be an issue.

After the Conyngham Victorian restorations of 1878 the house had complex sewerage, water and heating systems with apparently 48 hearths and chimneys.

For more about the history of Bifrons and in particular the changing form of the house see <https://www.kentarchaeology.org.uk/Research/Pub/ArchCant/Vol.110%20-%201992/110-13.pdf>



Going back down The Street and walking carefully in single file again, we will pass **Bifrons Cottage (refurbished in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and renamed Bifrons House)** on the Patrixbourne (west) side of The Street. It was once the home of the estate bailiff and may have been built as the Dower house for the mansion – although I do not think it has ever been used as such. It is similar in style to the other cottages in the village but larger.

*The north-east front is half-H-shaped. Tiled roof with grouped chimney stacks. Two storeys in painted brick, the first floor of the wings faced with roughcast. Three gables. Three windows, casements. The first floor of the wings oversails and is supported on elaborate carved columns. Scalloped bargeboards to the gables. Small bay on the ground floor of the centre portion, including door and flanking lights. The north-west front is of higher elevation. One window. Gable with similar bargeboards and coronet and date 1870. Bay window of 3 tiers of 5 lights on ground and first floors. Small gabled porch to the north-east of this.*

We will continue past Elephant and Lion cottage (now on our left) and stop on the grass patch by the electricity sub-station opposite the frontage of Mulberry House.

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Looking south the ornate and very attractive **Oast house** is dated 1869. The Marchioness had died by then so it was probably her son, the 2nd Marquis, who continued with this and other estate enhancements. There are three cylindrical oasts and a central hoist. At the gable ends of the stowage purlins and wall brackets support the unusual barge boards which in turn support spear-shaped finials.

*Dated 1869 in gable end. Two storeys red brick. Tiled roof with 4 hipped dormers and hipped projections at the ends and over the central hoist. Four mullioned and transomed diamond paned casements. Three cylindrical casts with conical tiled roofs having cowls and fantails.*



*The Oast dated 1869*



**Oast Cottages beyond** and many of the cottages around the corner towards the church are more examples of cottages dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century which were altered by the Conynghams to the picturesque style in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Oast cottages once had porches but they were removed many years ago. They probably wouldn't survive the large lorries which these days sometimes come through the village on poor *sat nav* advice despite the weight restriction on the bridge over the Nailbourne.



**The Oast cottages once had porches**

**The Old Vicarage sits on the Patrixbourne side of The Street behind its gate and high walls.** It is a C15 timber-framed building with mid-late C19 alterations and very extensive 20<sup>th</sup> century alterations including a garden redesign and a fine parterre.

*Two storeys. Half H-shaped. Four windows. The centre portion of 2 windows is stuccoed with a stringcourse. The projecting wings are gabled; the ground floor of the north-west one is stuccoed and of the south-east one flints with rusticated quoins. The first floor oversails on the protruding ends of the floor joists, the north-west one being close-studded, the south-east one plastered. The gables above oversail also on bressumers and brackets, the north-west one has an attic window. Modern bays on ground floor, Tiled roof with tall brick stacks.*

With regard to the vicarage, in 1782 Seymour recorded that Rev Edward Taylor, as both patron and incumbent, had made “great additions to the house which is now fit for the accommodation of a genteel family”. It was valued at £5 7s 4d.

When we walk back round the Old Vicarage to St Mary's church note the Unicorn plaque on the garden wall above the street porch to the Vicarage.

I have always wondered about why the pub on Bekesbourne Hill was called The Unicorn. I thought maybe it had to do with the publican Elijah Bartlett who was well versed in the ways of natural medicine with which the Unicorn is commonly associated. Elijah had strong views on such matters and was taken to court for refusing to have his child immunised. The child herself grew up to be an expert on herbal/medical plants.

However, I wonder now if the name of the pub came about partly because the crest of the Conyngham coat of arms is a Unicorn – said to denote 'extreme courage, virtue and strength'.

I think it is probably a distillation of the two. The Unicorn is a symbol of purity, chastity and grace and is said to have tears that can heal physical wounds and sorrows of the heart. Its horn is deemed to have the capability to neutralise poisons.

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**Now in the churchyard of St Mary's we are near The Barton** and its associated cottages. Barton means a farmstead and the word derives from barley enclosure. This is one of the oldest buildings in Patricbourne C15 and notable particularly for its original timber-framing and its front door with ornamental iron hinges.

*Restored C15 timber-framed and close-studded building with plaster infilling, the first floor over sailing on a moulded bressumer, the protruding ends of the floor joists and brackets on the south and west fronts. Steeply-pitched hipped tiled roof. Two storeys. Three windows above two of three lights to ground floor, casements with glazing bars. Door in penticed porch (with penthouse).*

**Barton Cottage and Crest Cottage** are both older cottages, altered in the cottage orné style.

*One storey and attic in red brick with tiled roof with gable end to the south. One hipped dormer and a plastered gable above casement windows of 2 and 3 lights and a canted bay to the ground floor. Gabled porch with bargeboards and wood barley sugar columns. Door with ornamental iron hinges. Two brick stacks with flat rain hoods. Armorial plaque to gable end.*

**Round the corner and familiar to most people is Waterfall cottage** We cannot see it from here and I do not propose to walk round. It is notable for the remnants of the water gardens of Bifrons Park to the rear of the property. Once two (or possibly three) cottages, it is now one dwelling.

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**Waterfall Cottage**

*Cottages originally C18 or before, but altered in Cottage orné style in mid C19 as part of the estate village of Bifrons. One storey and attics in red brick with tile roof with brick stacks, ornamentally grouped. Carved bargeboard to gable end. The south cottage has a rendered gable with one window and 3 hipped dormers. Penticed wood porch and one window with rectangular dripmould and one with wood surround on brackets and carved cornice. The north cottage has a gabled porch with scalloped bargeboards and door with ornamental iron hinges. One window under rectangular dripmould. The windows are of 3 lights.*

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**St Mary's Church** I am not planning to take you inside the church. To explore it properly will take a long time and is not within my sphere of interest or expertise. It is a subject for another time. Suffice to say that there is a church listed in the Domesday survey (1084).





### St Mary's from the bridge over the Nailbourne

Evidence suggests that a completely new church was built circa 1170 in Norman times. St Mary's is in Simon Jenkins' book of 1000 best churches. It is renowned for its beautiful Norman doorway and for its Swiss and Flemish stained glass windows gifted by the Marchioness in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The windows originally date from 1538 to 1670.

The Norman doorway has delicately carved capitals and tympanum under a tall, pointed canopy with a niche carved with the Lamb of God. There are five orders in the Tympanum (ie arches). Look for the mass clocks on the door jambs. Also for the damage to the doorway which is attributed to the destruction that took place locally in the Civil War (c1640).

The figure above the doorway of the Priest's door into the chancel is thought to be St Thomas (Becket) as there is a mitre on the head and the right hand is raised in Benediction. I thought it was pertinent to mention this in the 850<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the murder of St Thomas (2020).

I would also like to draw your attention to the yew-lined path from the church door which leads to the beautiful iron gate into the woods and thence to Bifrons. This is the route that the residents at Bifrons and the staff would have walked to church. The Nailbourne did not come quite so close then – the channel you see here was cut circa 2003 to bypass Waterfall Cottage and to bring the stream in a straight line with the bridge.

**While we are here I would like to talk about the garden of Bifrons** The oil painting of the Bargrave house which I mentioned earlier dated to sometime in the period of 1695 to 1705 and shows a typical Jacobean garden enclosed by brick walls and containing: formal beds and planting; many statues; and a gazebo. There were gates in the wall at the end of the garden which opened onto an avenue of trees leading down to the Nailbourne. The stream had been channelled into a canal which had two islands at one end of it and a bathing house with rooms

and beds for visitors. This canal, which I have heard be called Gregory's canal, still exists downstream of the ornamental bridge which carries a bridleway over the stream in the field adjacent to Patricbourne road.

Later paintings of the house and its surroundings show that the brick walls had been removed and the formal garden had disappeared. The Landscape school of park and garden led by Capability Brown became fashionable from 1750 so it seems likely that the clearance of the formal garden was carried out when the house was in the ownership of the Taylor family and about the time that the Jacobean house was demolished and rebuilt in Georgian style by Rev Edward Taylor (c1787).

The oil painting is currently attributed to the artist Jan van der Vaardt (1647 -1721). He is the fifth artist to which the painting has been attributed and he is still a 'perhaps'. Interestingly he is renowned as an artist with trompe d'oeil skills. He painted a famous trompe d'oeil of a violin hanging on a wall at Chatsworth House.



**Oil painting of the Bargrave house painted circa 1695  
attributed to Jan van Vaardt (1647 -1721).**

The oil painting of Bifrons is in the tradition of country house and garden view painting. It depicts the estate of Reverend Edward Taylor who is probably the leading horseman in his red garb here. The rocky outcrop does not exist and has nothing to do with Kentish geology. The view of the Harry Tower of the Cathedral in the background is not visible over the crest of the



hill and in reality there is no tithe barn (and to the best of my knowledge has never has been a one) next to St Mary's church. Therefore some measure of artistic licence applies to this painting which could probably be described as a vanity painting.

**As we walk back to Old Palace Road note the fine balcony of Patrixbourne Lodge on the right.** This is a Georgian house which was possibly built on the site of an older house which in 1800 was named Heart's Hall.

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**Now on the footbridge over the Nailbourne leading up Keeper's Hill we are opposite Court House** another early 17<sup>th</sup> century building. Once two (or possibly three) cottages it has for been one dwelling since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. On the north face there is a shaped Dutch Gable end with an ox-eye recess. It was at one time owned by John Lawrence and later Augustine Sergeant both of who were local builders and there was a builder's yard at the back. Both these gentlemen have impressive gravestones on the left side of the path up to Bekesbourne church.

At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century one at least of the cottages was occupied by the Bifrons blacksmith Charles Dungey and family. Mr and Mrs Dungey played a prominent role in the life of Bekesbourne church and they too are buried there. The house was later owned circa 1958 by Dr Bullen whose daughter married into the Mowll family.



**Court House, Old Palace Road and Riverside Cottages**

You can see that the garden wall has been built up. Early photos show it half the height with a garden gate leading to the verandah.



*Early 17<sup>th</sup> timber-framed building with plaster infilling on the south front, its first floor oversailing on the protruding end of the floor joists and with curved braces concealed by a tiled canopy. Steeply-pitched hipped tiled roof with 17<sup>th</sup> brick chimney stack to south front. Two storeys, 2 windows. The east front is faced with red brick. In the centre is a massive brick chimneystack with tumbling-in. To the north of this is one window and to the south 2 blocked window spaces.*

**The Green** There are three cottages here - no's 1, 2 and 3. The gardens at the front are now enclosed but until not so long ago (at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) they were an open-shared space which Laurence Boyle always claimed to be Patrixbourne village green. Now they are fenced with a walkway through the garden of No 1 to No's 2 and 3 beyond.



### **The Green**

*Seventeenth century or before. Timber-framed building of 2 storeys with plaster infilling and curved braces on first floor, the ground floor rebuilt in red brick. Hipped tiled roof. Five windows, casements, one of 3 lights, modern glazing bars. Windows of 3 and 2 lights to ground floor and 3 gabled tiled hoods to 3 doors.*

**The allotments** The two newer houses up the hill - Ty Bryn and Joslet (now Hill House) - are built on the site of the village allotments. In recent years Hill House has encompassed the old chalk pit into the curtilage of the house and altered the entrance significantly (and without planning permission).

**The footbridge** The Nailbourne made it necessary to have a ford here for vehicular traffic up the hill. It is said that the ford was altered during the war to enable military vehicles to cross it more easily. When the Nailbourne flows strongly it is deep enough to cut off the dwellings beyond and many a vehicle has been marooned here. A high-voltage cable runs under the Nailbourne here which makes it difficult to change the road bed. The footbridge dates from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. No doubt it replaced an earlier one.

*Small C18 bridge in red brick with brick coping, ramped to one side, flat to the other. Segmental-leaded arch over stream.*

### **Keeper's Cottage**

At the top of Keeper's Hill there is a mid 19<sup>th</sup> century estate cottage of the same type as those in the village. In 1905 the keeper was called Poland and Keeper's Hill was called Poland's Hill at least until the 1930's. The land on the eastern side of the hill is recorded as a rabbit warren in the title map of 1840. Meat would have been bred for the Bifrons kitchens.



**Keeper's Cottage once the home of keeper Poland**

*One storey and attics in chequered red and blue brick with tile roof with centre grouped stacks. Carved bargeboards to gable ends. Two gabled dormers, applied timber ornament, carved bargeboards, diamond-paned casements. Two rectangular bays on ground floor with carved entablatures and 3-light casements. Two carved round-beaded panels to arched door in moulded frame. Gabled porch with carved bargeboards and finial, twisted columns. Rear wing.*

**Riverside Cottages 3 and 4** As we walk down Old Palace Road we will pass the weatherboarded cottages known as 3 and 4 Riverside Cottages. Where are 1 and 2? It is difficult to say but the numbering is said to date from the auction of Patricbourne property dating from 1950 when all the individual lots were assigned numbers. The second cottage was once the village bakery: the side window with its black shutter is where the bread was sold. It was cooked in the bakery oven house to the rear of the cottage – note the chimney now in need of repointing.



*Pair of late C18 cottages. Two parallel ranges. Two storeys weatherboarded. Hipped slate roof. Two sashes with glazing bars intact. Simple doorcases. Lean-to extension to No 4.*

**Vine Cottage** Sadly neglected for many years and somewhere that I have always privately called 'Sleeping Beauty's cottage' the site is now under renovation. Once the home of the eccentric Professor Laurence Boyle who took a great interest in the history of Patricbourne and Bifrons but did not look after his house.

**Riverside Cottage** The last dwelling before we meet the Recreation Ground is Riverside Cottage. It was once three cottages. On the auction list they were numbered 17, 18 and 19. Two of the cottages shared the front entrance on Old Palace Road and the third had a door on the side at the back. Nowadays they are all one cottage and although not listed they are contained within the Patricbourne conservation area.

## Appendix

### Ada

One of the first tenants of Bifrons after the Taylors moved out to Bourne Park was Lady Byron. She was there from 1827 to 1831 with her daughter, Augusta (Ada), and a governess.

Lady Byron didn't much like the house (or Ada it is said) and she spent much of the time travelling on the Continent leaving Ada with her grandmother and her tutor, Mary Somerville – herself a mathematician.

Ada was aged about 12 when her mother rented the house near here and I like to think of her walking the lanes here although she was often ill. In June 1829 she was paralysed after a bout of measles. She was subjected to continuous bed rest for nearly a year but by 1831, she was able to walk with crutches.

Ada decided she wanted to fly. Apparently she went about the project methodically with imagination and passion. Her first step, in February 1828, was to construct wings. She investigated different material and sizes. She considered various materials for the wings: paper, oiled-silk, wires, and feathers. She examined the anatomy of birds to determine the right proportion between the wings and the body.

She decided to write a book *Flyology* illustrating some of her findings. She thought about what equipment she would need; for example, a compass, to "cut across the country by the most direct road", so that she could surmount mountains, rivers, and valleys.

Later Ada become Lady Lovelace and she worked with Charles Babbage as the first recorded computer programmer. Babbage called her the 'Enchantress of Numbers'; and in 1980 the US Department of Defense Military Standard named a computer language after her.

### **Talbots**

The first notable tenants after the Conynghams ceased to reside here circa 1882 were Colonel and Mrs Talbot and their daughter. They ran a grand house with society parties from 1920-1939.

The Talbots agreed to lease Bifrons for two years from April 1st 1920 for £1000 per year. The details of the lease are quite revealing: the properties leased were the "mansion house, dairy, laundry, cottage, stables, coach-houses, offices, gardens, gardener's house, hot-houses, greenhouses, pleasure grounds and one of the cottages numbered 23 on the plan [Upper Lodge] at the time occupied by the gardener. In the Smoking Room there were two small bookcases and four cupboards which contained uniforms. Other occupied cupboards included one in the Library and one under the Billiard Room stairs. A whole room over the Stables remained similarly occupied. The lessees were required to contribute 15s per week to employ one Head Gardener and three under-gardeners.

One factor influencing Colonel Talbot to rent Bifrons was its proximity to the St. Lawrence Ground in Canterbury. He had played in a first-class cricket match in July 1875 as a member of the home team in the *Gentlemen of the South v. Players of the North* match at Prince's cricket ground, London. Most memorable for him must have been playing in the same team as the legendary W. Grace.

The lease was renewed for a further seven years from April 1st, 1929, at the same rent. Colonel Talbot died at Bifrons on September 3rd, 1931. Mrs Talbot and her daughter Rose continued to live at Bifrons and sometimes in London.

from April 25th, 1935, the public were admitted to the gardens at Bifrons on certain Thursdays on payment of a shilling in aid of the Queen's Institute of District Nursing.

Details of Mrs. Talbot's domestic establishment were recorded in an interview in October 1988 between Tim Allen of the Canterbury Archaeological Trust and Miss Joan Carpenter of The Green, Patricbourne. Joan started work in 1937 at the age of 14 as a scullery maid and continued there until 1940. She related that there were ten indoor servants (the butler, the footman, the hallboy, the housekeeper, two parlour maids, the cook, two kitchen maids and the lady's maid) and eleven outdoor servants (six gardeners, the groom, a stable boy, the chauffeur and two laundrymaids). The indoor staff lived and worked in the semi-basement and access to the bedrooms in the attic was gained by the back stairs. The kitchen was connected by a stair directly to a servery for the dining room.

The function of each of the rooms in the semi-basement was also recorded in this interview. There was an outside larder for storing game, fish and Welsh mutton; an inner larder, a kitchen-staff room, the scullery, the kitchen, the linen room, the butler's pantry, the brushing room for polishing boots and shoes, the footman and hallboy's bedroom, the housekeeper and cook's room, the housemaid's sitting room, the servants' hall, a toilet, a water-tank room containing a large tank for softening water, a boiler room which had two other rooms associated with it; and a store room.

Mrs Talbot relinquished the lease of Bifrons with effect from Lady Day, 1939, The agent advertised for a new tenant:

“An imposing mansion in the Regency style: finely situated in its own park with entrance lodge and gardeners' cottages, and containing 5 reception rooms, billiard room, 12 principal bed and dressing rooms, 3 bath rooms, nursery suite, 6 servants' offices: the gardens and grounds are tastefully laid out and inexpensive in upkeep, and there is ample stabling and garage space; electricity from private plant; main water; vacant from Lady day next: shooting over about 1,000 acres can be arranged”.

### **The War Years**

Like many large houses in the area, Bifrons was requisitioned for housing troops some time shortly after the outbreak of World War II. The 64th (7th London) Field Regiment Royal Artillery (Territorial Army) recruited men in Fulham, Golder's Green, Putney, Shepherd's Bush and Paddington and billeted them in Bifrons and Mystole House, Chartham, and possibly other such houses until the middle of 1940.

V. C. Fairfield reported that the atmosphere was effectively like an off-beat, low-class, boarding-school with the battery numbering some two hundred and fifty men billeted in the bedrooms and stables. It is possible that to accommodate so many soldiers some were out housed in Sondes House and Wanstall's. One of the lodges was used as an unfurnished sanatorium and first-aid post. There was no heating and the floors were bare apart from straw palliasses which were provided for sleeping.

A bugler blew reveille every morning while the Union Jack was raised. Breakfast, which was eaten in the cold semi-darkness, usually consisted of eggs. The yolks had what appeared to be a kind of plastic skin on them which was almost unbreakable. By the time the food, which was prepared in large vats, was distributed it was almost cold due to the lack of heat in the dining area. All meals were of poor standard and there was no noticeable improvement during the stay.

During the daytime aspects of artillery warfare were practised. When the weather was good, taking the instruments to an attractive bit of the countryside within walking distance doing some survey, map-reading or a command-post exercise was said to be an enjoyable way of spending a morning or afternoon session.



It is said that the gates at either end of Old Palace Road were removed at this time to enable the marching and also that the level of the ford at the bottom of Keeper's Hill was changed to accommodate the army vehicles.

Parades finished at 4.30 p.m. after which soldiers were free until the lights were put out for the night. Saturday evenings were spent in a pub in Bridge or occasionally in Canterbury. Spare time was spent playing chess or card games. Entertainment was sometimes provided by groups of visiting artistes or by sing-songs.

Night-training included going out in vehicles in the cold, snow-covered, countryside for two or three hours as if advancing or retreating. The route was pre-selected and very difficult to follow because of the lack of signposts and the difficulty of reading a map with a hand-torch. A mug of hot tea or cocoa and a snack were provided on return. The winter of 1939/40 was both very long and very cold. There was a heavy fall of snow which remained for several weeks.

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### **The Stuarts**

James 1 1603-1625

Charles 1 1625-1649

Restoration of the Monarchy 1660

Charles 2 1660-1684

James 11 1685-1688

William and Mary 1689-1702

Anne 1702-1714

### **The Hanoverians**

George 1 1714-1727

George 11 1727-1760

George 111 1760-1820

George IV 1820-1830 (infamous Prince of Wales)

William IV 1830-1837

Victoria 1837-1901

Edward VII 1901-1910

### **The House of Windsor (renamed during WW1)**

George V 1910-1936

Edward VII 1936

George VI 1936-1952

Elizabeth 1 1952-