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## THE BUILDER OF BIFRONS

In their interesting note on the excavations at the site of Bifrons in Patrixbourne, R. Cross and T. Allen say that the original house 'was erected either by Sir Robert Bargrave (*d.* 1600) or by his son, Sir John Bargrave' (*Arch. Cant.*, cvii [1989], 328), but neither Robert nor John, nor any other member of the family, was ever knighted.

In his will Robert Bargrave describes himself as Robert Bargar, of Bridge, yeoman, but he was also a tanner there and was buried in the chancel of Bridge church on 4th January, 1600/01, as was his wife Jane, daughter of John Gilbert, of St. Peter's, Sandwich, late in 1603. He had directed in his will, which was dated in 1598, that he was to be buried with his father at Patrixbourne, but he apparently changed his mind. He was identified with Bridge, where he had his tanhouse, rather than with Patrixbourne, and of his eleven children all were baptized at Bridge, except the last three, who were baptized at Patrixbourne, beginning with his son, George, on 2nd April, 1586.

John, the eldest son of Robert, was certainly of Patrixbourne and, moreover, he did not inherit his father's tanhouse at Bridge, although his eldest son was baptized there in 1598. Of his seven remaining children, five were baptized at Patrixbourne, but Sarah, the fifth, was baptized at Tilmanstone, on 8th November, 1607, and John, the sixth, at Nonington, on 18th November, 1610, suggesting the family's absence from Patrixbourne during that time. Their father is reputed to have been the builder of Bifrons, and it would appear from these details that he was, and that the construction was carried out in the period 1607 to 1611. It was in September 1611, too, that John Bargrave, alias Bargar, of Patrixbourne, had a grant of arms from Camden, Garter.

The possibility that John's father, Robert, built Bifrons cannot as yet be ruled out, but is contrary to tradition and not really supported by the existing evidence. One interesting aspect of the matter is the sudden rise to riches of the Bargar, or Bargraves, of Bridge, because before John, certainly, and Robert, possibly, the family were of somewhat humdrum station in Willesborough. Wealth may have come through John's marriage to Jane, the daughter and co-heir of Giles Crouche, of London, about 1597.

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